

# **SILS Ethical & Inclusive Metadata in UC Library Search Project Team (EIMP-PT)**

## **Final Report for Operations Team**

October 23, 2024

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# Executive Summary

The Ethical & Inclusive Metadata Practices in UC Library Search Project Team (EIMP-PT) was formed in January 2023 with the purpose of exploring and documenting ways to make our catalogs and discovery systems inclusive and welcoming to our communities. The EIMP-PT held its kickoff meeting on January 31, 2023 and met biweekly to discuss deliverables and formulate recommendations for implementing EDI metadata work at the systemwide level. A key deliverable in 2023 was the administering of the DEIA Metadata Projects and Practices in Libraries and Archives on UC Campuses Survey to uncover the current state of UC Libraries' efforts in addressing DEIA issues in metadata and discovery and to identify needs regarding the successful implementation of ethical & inclusive metadata practices. The survey gathered information on campus practices, policies, and projects, DEIA metadata issues observed in library data and discovery, barriers to improving problematic metadata and discovery issues, and needs of campuses that can be addressed at the system level. The team completed an [interim report](#) that documented findings from the survey, which was submitted for feedback to the SILS Operations Team in January 2024. This final report includes the team's final recommendations.

## Membership

- Marcia Barrett, co-chair, UCSC
- Catherine Busselen, co-chair (2023), UCSB
- Tricia Lampron, co-chair (2024), UCI
- Claudia Conrad (2023), CDL
- Ryan Finnerty, UCSD
- Rachel Jaffe (2023), UCSC
- Cathleen Lu, UCSF
- Latasha Means (2024), UCM
- Naomi Shiraishi (2024), UCB
- Israel Yáñez (2023), UCD
- Erica Zhang, UCLA

## Recommendations

This section details EIMP-PT recommendations regarding new opportunities to:

- Make the UC Library Search experience more inclusive for users
- Provide guidance on inclusive metadata work and training documentation for metadata practitioners
- Integrate inclusive metadata into current metadata workflows

These recommendations are based on survey participant feedback and review of the current landscape of profession-wide efforts to address ethical issues within the community of practice.

### **Create guidance for community best practices for ethical and inclusive descriptive metadata**

EIMP-PT recommends supporting the implementation of community best practices for ethical and inclusive descriptive metadata that can be used in a variety of metadata contexts. UC campuses are looking for guidance on how to begin doing this work and how to incorporate ethical and inclusive metadata into their workflows but are unsure where to start. A group is needed to assist others with implementation. There are many existing guidelines, principles, and best practices in the cataloging community. Since the conclusion of the 2023 survey, some campuses have developed their own policies and workflows locally, and there could be opportunities to share more broadly.

UC campuses are looking for guidance on how to identify descriptive metadata requiring remediation and how (and what) to update. Training on new controlled vocabularies and best practices addressing creators and topics of traditionally marginalized communities are rapidly being published and distributed. The UC Libraries needs a place to gather these documents and provide training resources that have been reviewed and curated.

### **Facilitate cross-campus communication**

Survey responses indicated that metadata practitioners at the UC Libraries feel a lack of coordination across campuses regarding inclusive metadata. A mechanism for open communication would alleviate these concerns. There is also a need for a shared repository for documentation, best practices, training, etc. that can be easily updated and maintained.

### **Replace discovery display of non-inclusive LCSH with display of inclusive terms**

The Library of Congress (LC) announced on November 12, 2021 a subject heading change from *Illegal aliens* to *Noncitizens* and *Illegal immigration*. Many libraries have chosen to display the terms recommended by the [ALA Subject Analysis Committee Working Group on Alternatives to LCSH “Illegal Aliens”](#) instead – *Noncitizens* and *Undocumented immigrants*. LC updated a number of other Library of Congress Subject Headings (LCSH) that were non-inclusive or misrepresentative in 2021, 2022, and 2023; however, subject terms that can be considered harmful and/or offensive remain. Some libraries have created a workaround solution by displaying alternate terms that are accurate and more inclusive in place of harmful LCSH in Discovery systems. There is documentation on options for doing this in Ex Libris PrimoVE as well as documentation for the requisite PrimoVE configuration. This recommendation includes:

- Investigation and decision on the best way to address the display of harmful subject headings
- Development of workflows, including obtaining example headings
- Investigation on whether those heading are being worked on by SACO funnels

## **Create guidance for application of supplemental vocabularies in addition to LCSH**

Create guidance or implement existing community guidance for application of supplemental vocabularies in addition to LCSH and make decisions on when to use those alternative terms. LCSH is a broad vocabulary that oftentimes doesn't meet the needs of various communities. There are more specialized vocabularies such as Homosaurus and Library of Congress Demographic Group Terms (LCDGT) that provide more specific and inclusive terms that more accurately reflect the contents of the works. UC campuses indicated a need for guidance and training on new controlled vocabularies and best practices addressing creators and topics of traditionally marginalized communities. The UC Cataloging and Metadata Common Knowledge Group (CMCKG) has already put together best practices for application of terms from [Homosaurus: An International LGBTQ+ Linked Data Vocabulary](#). Other peer consortia have also put together best practices for using faceted terms in cataloging. Primo configuration rules have been documented by other libraries.

### **Examples:**

[CMCKG Homosaurus Guidelines](#)

[Orbis-Cascade Homosaurus Implementation Project](#)

[Orbis-Cascade Use of Faceted Terms in Cataloging](#)

## **Advocate for better DEI user experience with Ex Libris**

EIMP-PT recommends that an ongoing group participate in advocacy, assessment, and communication as it relates to inclusive metadata in UC Library Search. Some opportunities that the team has identified include:

- Reaching out to Ex Libris and/or providers to improve or fix Community Zone collections
- Advocacy to Ex Libris to enhance functionality of the Central Discovery Index (CDI)
- Advocacy to Ex Libris regarding enhancement of records
- Advocacy to UC and Ex Libris regarding DEI-related enhancement requests
- Reviewing and/or contributing to the Ex Libris [Idea Exchange](#) in support of inclusive metadata resource access and discovery
- Determining what questions are valuable for assessing decisions around inclusive metadata in UC Library Search and what metrics would support such questions
- Developing communication channels to promote campus contributions to inclusive metadata

## **Request to SILS Leadership Group & Operations Team**

Survey responses identified a need for a high level UC-wide body to raise the profile and priority level of DEIA metadata work. Doing so would normalize inclusive metadata practices at both campus and system levels. EIMP-PT created [Recommendations and Guidance for Creating an Inclusive Language in Library Metadata Statement](#) which was cited in the [June 2024 issue](#) of *Critcatenate*, an online news publication

focused on critical cataloging efforts. A recommendation from SILS Leadership Group and/or the SILS Operations Team for campuses to create a public-facing statement of commitment to inclusive language in library metadata would raise the visibility of this guidance and further support the prioritization of inclusive metadata work.

## Proposal for a New, Ongoing Inclusive Metadata Group

### Recommendation

EIMP-PT recommends the formation of an Inclusive Metadata SILS Knowledge Group (SKG), based on the OARM-PT suggestion for a newly proposed type of SILS group that would follow the model of the CKGs, but would also serve as a recommending body and communicate regularly with SILS Operations Subteams.<sup>1</sup> This SKG would be part of the SILS landscape as a community of practice, rather than as a subteam or project team. This group could:

- Monitor profession-wide efforts and provide guidance for the implementation of emerging best practices
- Explore and document UC-wide solutions for problematic and offensive subject terminology in bibliographic metadata in UC Library Search
- Provide guidance on implementing community best practices for revising and recontextualizing library resource descriptions containing harmful language and guidelines for the use of additional thesauri to improve representation in library metadata
- Identify and provide access to training documentation for diverse and equitable metadata in UC Library Search and the discoverability of accessible library resources

### Discussion

The EIMP-PT has identified a need for ongoing work to be carried out by the SILS Cohort, as mentioned in the above list. The project team discussed at length how to meet the needs of this ongoing work, and examined multiple options for how this ongoing work might be accomplished. The types of UCL groups the team considered included:

**A new SILS sub-group.** The team considered the idea of proposing a new type of SILS group within the current SILS structure, one that was not time-bound, but also needed expertise from the existing functional areas of current Operations Subteams. However, the team realized that such a group would entail a much larger conversation beyond the EIMP-PT about changes to the SILS governance structure as a whole.

**SILS Resource Management (RM) Operations Subgroup.** The co-chairs met with the current chair and vice-chair of RM and shared our recommendations. After consideration, the SILS chair & vice-chair

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<sup>1</sup> SILS Open Access Resource Management Project Team (2024). "Final Report for Operations Team." [https://docs.google.com/document/d/1flgq\\_9SvivUOYM41vx8A425hWL6aG-mF3tAsUk61fhQ/edit#heading=h.ua6h9cq0zy3e](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1flgq_9SvivUOYM41vx8A425hWL6aG-mF3tAsUk61fhQ/edit#heading=h.ua6h9cq0zy3e)

informed us that RM has the capacity to test alternate display of inclusive subject terms but has no capacity beyond that. In a meeting with Discovery Operations, we agreed that SILS RM would have final approval on changes that impact the Alma Network Zone (NZ).

**SILS Discovery Operations Subgroup.** The Primo VE configuration necessary to display inclusive terms for non-inclusive LCSH in Discovery has been documented by libraries who have done this work. The co-chairs met with the SILS Discovery Operations Team to share the EIMP-PT final recommendations, and we discussed options for display of inclusive terms for non-inclusive LCSH in Discovery. The Discovery Operations subgroup could serve in an advisory capacity for campuses choosing to make these configuration changes in their local instance of Primo VE, or these changes could be made at the Alma NZ level by CDL.

**Common Knowledge Groups (CKGs).** The Cataloging & Metadata CKG has recently undertaken efforts to improve access to our collections through the development of a project to add inclusive subject terminology from [Homosaurus: An International LGBTQ+ Linked Data Vocabulary](#) to our shared catalog records. While these are important efforts in moving SILS toward more inclusive metadata, the structure of the group does not require that these efforts continue. The CMCKG chair rotates biannually and sets priorities, and the group is not accountable to leadership, nor is it able to make decisions that directly affect practices for shared metadata in SILS. The group is also not exclusively charged with inclusive metadata work, which could fall behind on the priority list depending on other necessary work. Creation of a new CKG dedicated to inclusive metadata was considered; however, team members noted a few issues: CKGs depend on an engaged membership with a dedicated convener and inclusion in the UC Libraries Advisory Structure but are not necessarily part of the SILS structure. Team members want to ensure that any Inclusive Metadata ongoing group would remain active, have a dedicated membership, and report and advise through the SILS structure. Therefore, the team proposes creating an SKG, a SILS Knowledge Group.

**Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Common Knowledge Group (EDI CKG).** The EDI CKG charter states that this CKG is “a standing group of library staff members from across the UC system with a vested interest in the areas of equity, diversity, inclusion (EDI), as well as accessibility, and anti-racism in library policy and practice,”<sup>2</sup> and as such, encompasses all aspects of library EDI work, a far broader scope than inclusive metadata in library discovery.

## **General Group Structure and Communication**

The proposed group requires that members have expertise in DEIA metadata issues & solutions. Because SILS RM Operations will have final approval on any changes that impact the shared Alma/Primo VE environments, this SKG need not be a representative group. The SKG would meet regularly and members would be expected to complete work outside of the meeting time.

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<sup>2</sup> [Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Common Knowledge Group Charter](#)

# Proposed Pilot Project

## Recommendation

We recommend that an Inclusive Metadata SKG pilot a selection of [10 non-inclusive Library of Congress Subject Headings](#) for utilizing alternate display in Primo. Review and test the options for alternate term display in PrimoVE. Determine pros and cons for each option, along with configuration rules and other back-end work needed to implement alternate term display. Make a recommendation on an option local campuses can implement and the necessary resources to do so.

## Discussion

The EIMP team proposes that its recommendations and the new SKG be considered a pilot project. This would allow the SKG members to assess the impacts of their work, make any revisions to recommendations, and evaluate if the SKG model is working well.

Possible questions to answer at the conclusion of the pilot:

- What stakeholders should be consulted?
- What decision-making power does this group need?
- How has the SKG model worked? What worked well? What were the challenges?
- How might the work done during the pilot impact the user experience?
- What impact on local campuses will the recommendation for alternate term display have?
- How might future impact on users be determined?
- What kind of ongoing maintenance is needed?

# Appendix A - EIMP-PT Charge

## **SILS Ethical and Inclusive Metadata in UC Library Search Project Team Charge**

*Approved by SILS August 24, 2022*

### **Introduction**

We are at a point where the broader cataloging community is ready for “power-holding institutions” to make changes in their practices focused on reparative and inclusive descriptive metadata; at the same time, the shared UC ILS makes it possible for UC to act as such a “power-holding institution”. We are well positioned to focus our efforts on creating reparative and inclusive descriptive metadata in UC Library Search. In order to accomplish this, legacy cataloging terms and practices need to be analyzed for harmful language, vocabularies that do not represent or erase cultural nuance, and rectified with a goal to create a practice of anti-racist and anti-biased description and classification for a more diverse, equitable, inclusive, just and accessible (DEIJA) UC Library Search.

The shared ILS creates an expectation that all campuses will harmonize to the extent possible our

descriptions, subject headings, and classifications across institutions, but this is not currently the case. This project will help to harmonize efforts across the campuses for better discovery and ethical description.

Some campuses have already started this work, but in the shared system, if these decisions aren't made in collaboration/concert then it may cause unforeseen problems in discovery.

### **Charge and core deliverables**

The Ethical and Inclusive Metadata Practices in UC Library Search Project Team will survey all UC campuses regarding local efforts aimed at reparative and inclusive language already in place or being discussed. The project team will assess the current state of UC Library Search regarding DEIJA. The project team will determine if any of that existing work could be incorporated or implemented systemwide. The project team will identify existing resources and training materials for campuses embarking on these endeavors. The project team will determine what systemwide harmonization efforts can help further support the local campuses current work in this area and recommend best practices for those campuses who have not yet been able to address these needs locally. Implementation of the recommendations is the responsibility of the appropriate SILS Operations Subteams and individual campuses.

### **Deliverables**

- Identify needs at each campus with regards to successful implementation of ethical and inclusive metadata practice for description, faceting, subject headings, controlled vocabularies, and authority records in SILS and UC Library Search (Alma and Primo).
- Create a list of UC reparative and inclusive cataloging local projects and practices that can be shared system-wide.
- Create a means of information sharing and communication around local campus efforts
- Create a space for resources and training materials for UC libraries addressing DEIJA in cataloging, metadata and discovery
- Make concrete recommendations for addressing representation issues with vocabularies, including misrepresentation due to factual error or bias and underrepresentation or erasure due to lack of specific headings.
- Develop best practices to create anti-racist and anti-biased description and classification for a more equitable, diverse and inclusive UC Library Search
- Make concrete recommendations for reparative cataloging for catalogers and systems personnel
- Make concrete recommendations for improved DEIJA discovery experience Will include in work plan for the new group
- Hold regular updates with the stakeholders
- Create final report

### **Reporting line**

The SILS Ethical and Inclusive Metadata Practices in UC Library Search Project Team will report to the SILS Operations Team, which will provide guidance and serve as the escalation path as needed by the project team.

### **Time commitment and expectations**

The EIMP Project Team is charged to carry out this work in a one year time frame.<sup>33</sup> The team will hold monthly virtual meetings to carry out their charge, with additional ad-hoc meetings as needed.

Members are expected to commit an additional 2-4 hours of work per week, outside of meetings.

### **Membership**

- 5-6 campus members + 1 CDL member + 1 Project manager
- Functional Areas:
  - Cataloging, metadata, special collections, discovery, systems
- Staff Time Needed:
  - 2-4 hours/week

The project team's chair will be selected by the membership.

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<sup>33</sup>The project team requested a one-year extension to complete the deliverables.