The role of controlled vocabularies in inclusive description

SHARON MIZOTA (SHE/HER)
GETTY INTERNATIONAL TERMINOLOGY WORKING GROUP
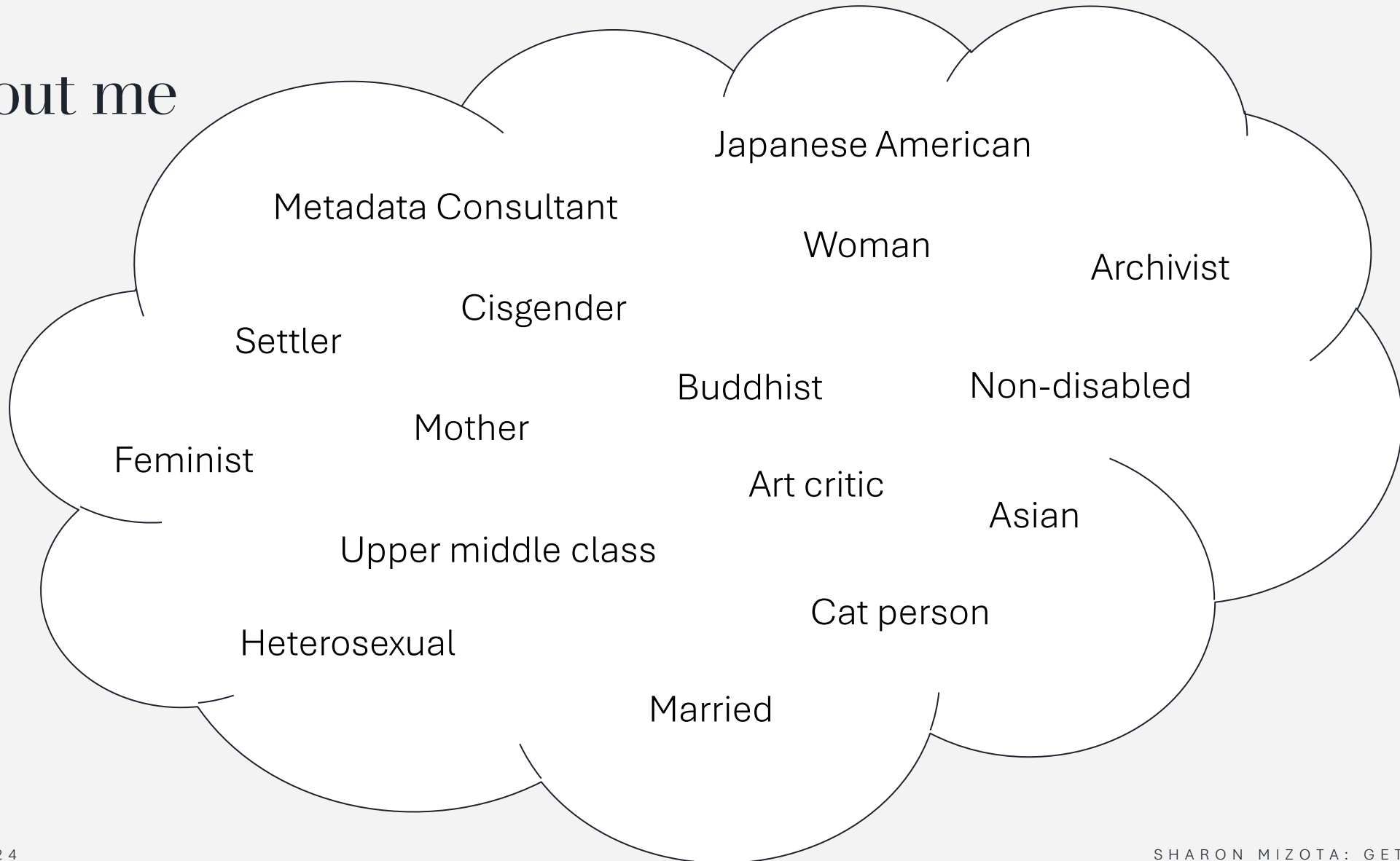OCTOBER 23, 2024

Land acknowledgment

I come to you today as a settler on the unceded territories of the Gabrielino/Tongva and Chumash peoples. I acknowledge the colonization and cultural genocide that separated these nations, and all Indigenous peoples in North America, from control of their homelands. I acknowledge that as a settler here I have benefited from this separation. I honor and pay respect to these ancestors and communities who continue to nurture life on this land and support them in the resurgence of Indigenous rights and sovereignty.

Native Land Digital

About me

Japanese American

Metadata Consultant

Woman

Archivist

Cisgender

Settler

Buddhist

Non-disabled

Mother

Feminist

Art critic

Asian

Upper middle class

Cat person

Heterosexual

Married

What I'll talk about:

- What is inclusive description?

- Why is it important?

- What are the principles?

- Project examples

- How can vocabularies support inclusive description?

- Questions & comments

WHAT IS INCLUSIVE DESCRIPTION?

Inclusive description strives to represent people as they characterize themselves. It typically includes terminology related to identity facets, such as race, gender, ability, culture, language, sexual orientation, etc. It often involves the remediation of practices or data that exclude, silence, harm, or mischaracterize marginalized people.*

 SHARON MIZOTA: GETTY ITWG

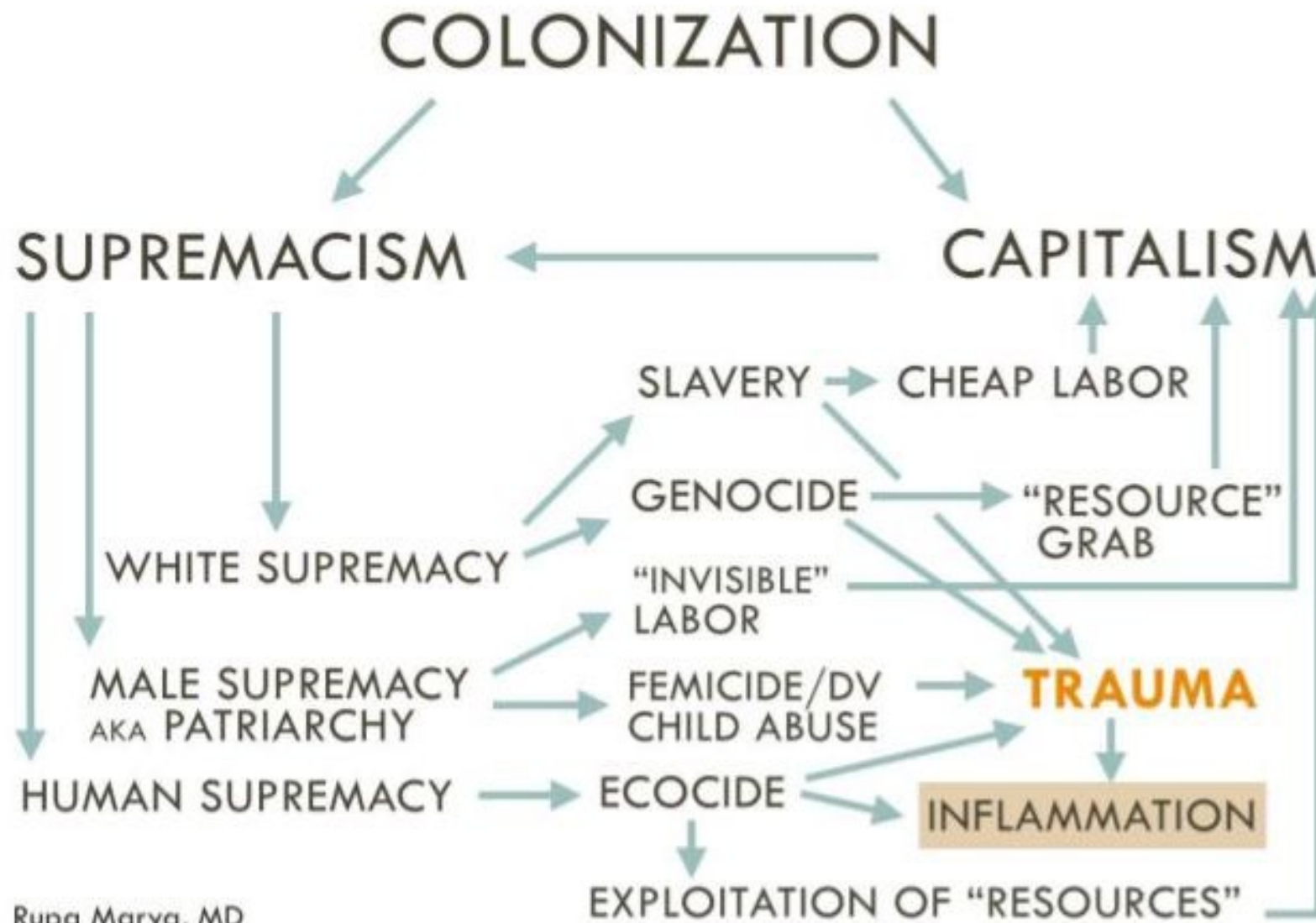Image: Society of American Archivists' Reparative Description webinar, 2022.
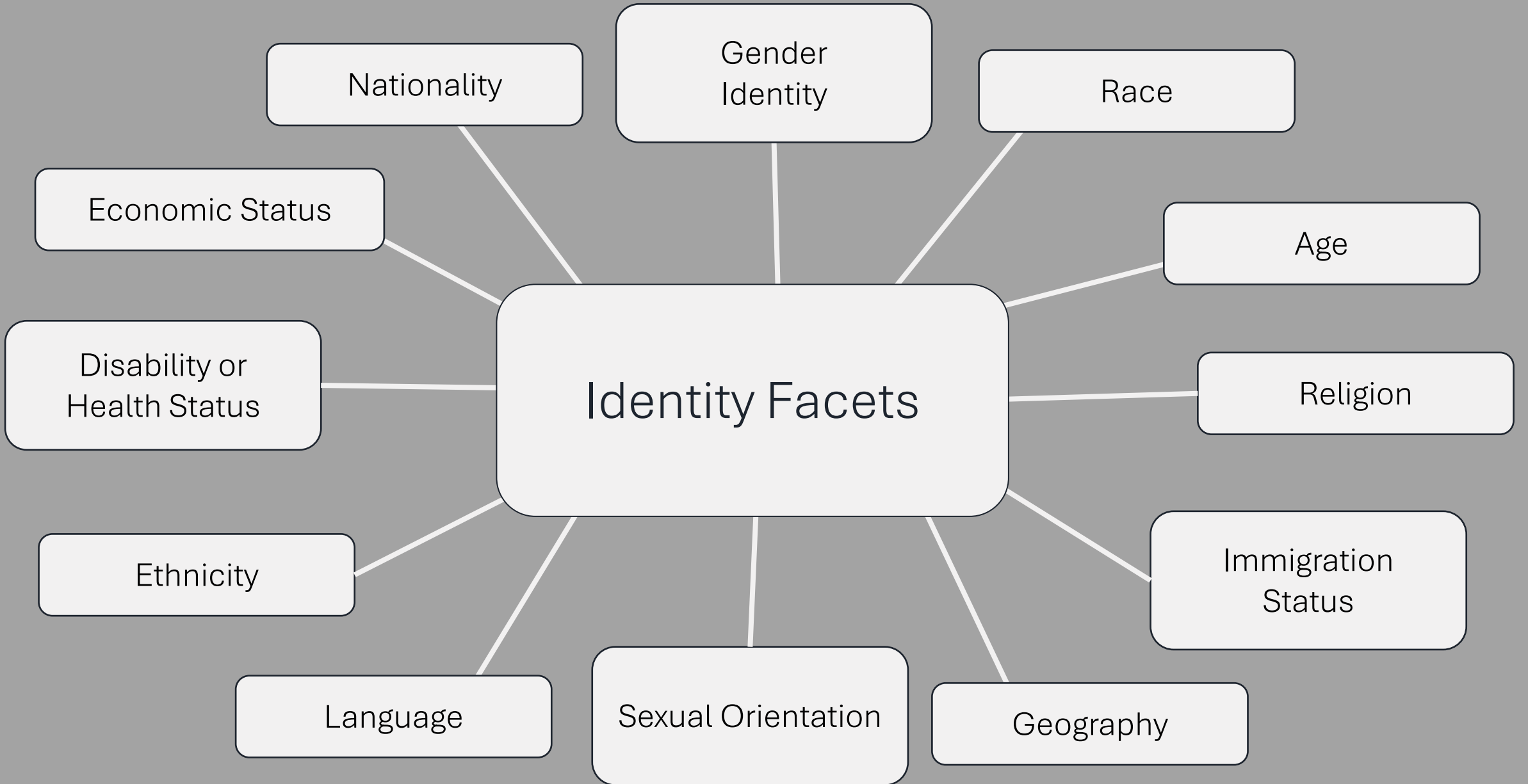
Qualities of inclusive description

- Acknowledges diversity

- Strives toward accurate & responsible representation for all

- Actively takes steps to mitigate or remove harm

- Is accessible & transparent

Image: Detail, "Das Gehirn eines Künstlers" (The Brain of an Artist) by Daniel Chodowiecki (1726-1801) Public domain, via Wikimedia Commons

WHY IS INCLUSIVE DESCRIPTION IMPORTANT?

- Historical inequities

- Debunking neutrality

Image: Holliday, Michelle. "The Roots—and Replacement—of Colonization," Age of Thrivability (blog).

No one is neutral

- Myth of neutrality in LIS

- "Neutrality" has typically meant WEBCCCHAM*

- No one is "neutral" or "default"

- We want to see ourselves

Image: Detail, Louis Blythe louisjblythe, CC0, via Wikimedia Commons

*Michelle Caswell, "Dusting for Fingerprints: Introducing Feminist Standpoint Appraisal."
Journal of Critical Library and Information Studies 3:1 (2019).

PRINCIPLES OF INCLUSIVE DESCRIPTION

- People first

- Cultural humility

- Care for communities

Putting people first

- Too much focus on holdings and resources — "the stuff"

- Move from "users" to people

- Move from a resource focus to a people focus.

Image: University of Michigan School for Environment and Sustainability from Ann Arbor
CC BY 2.0, via Wikimedia Commons

Cultural humility*

- Open to learning, making space for other voices

- Cultural competency vs. cultural humility
  - CC is a goal
  - Do your research

- Life-long process of self-evaluation & reflection

- Being ok with not knowing

- Apologize when you mess up

Image: Samuel Colman, American, 1832–1920, *Study of White Daisy, Chamomile Stem with Two Petals, and a Chamomile Petal*, 1875–90, Cooper Hewitt, Smithsonian Design Museum, Smithsonian Institution. CC0.
*Tai, Jessica. "Cultural Humility as a Framework for Anti-Oppressive Archival Description." *Journal of Critical Library and Information Studies* 3. (October 1, 2020).

Cultural humility: Research

- Handbooks and style guides

- Every community is different

- Learn about specific issues around representation

National Center on Disability and Journalism

About   Disability Language Style Guide   Contest
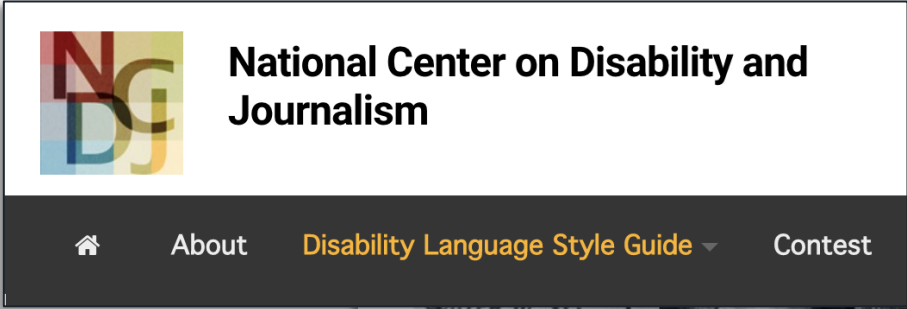
Power of Words Handbook

A Guide to Language about Japanese Americans in World War II

Understanding Euphemisms and Preferred Terminology

minority rights group international

WHO WE ARE

World Directory of Minorities and Indigenous Peoples

Search the directory

HOMOSAURUS

AN INTERNATIONAL LGBTQ+ LINKED DATA VOCABULARY

Cultural humility: Consultation

- Build authentic, trusting, *ongoing* relationships — this may take time
  - Get identity information directly, when possible
  - Remember cultural humility
  - Consider focus groups or advisory boards
- When possible, compensate consultants.

Image: Detail, Utagawa Hiroshige, *Foxes Meeting at Oji*, 1857, Metropolitan Museum of Art. Public Domain.

Cultural humility: Listening

- Listen to how people identify themselves

- Consider the needs of people searching & viewing your collections

- Emphasize & respect humanity

"Black people"
NOT "Blacks"

"Died by suicide"
NOT "Committed suicide"

"Person of short stature"
NOT "Midget"

Other considerations:
People-first vs. Identity-first language

People-first emphasizes the humanity of the subject:

- Person with disabilities

- People experiencing homelessness

Identity-first emphasizes a specific identity:

- Deaf person

- autistic person

Choice depends on the community

SHARON MIZOTA: GETTY ITWG

Other considerations: Tracking language to avoid

Develop a lexicon of problematic language

- Problem LCSH, Cataloging Lab

- Cultural Heritage Terminology Network, Carissa Chew

- List of pejorative terms for people, Wikipedia
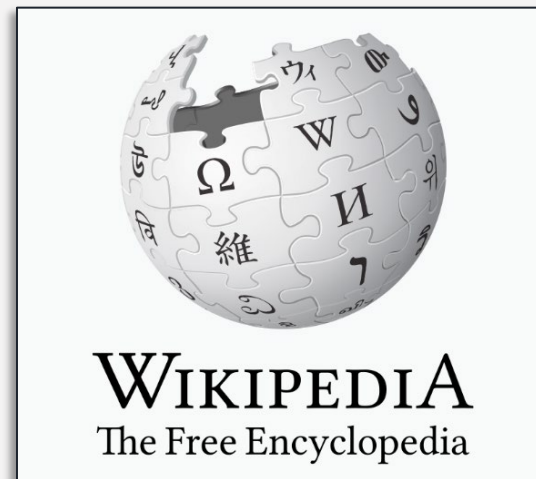
PROBLEM LCSH

This is a crowdsourced compilation of Library of Congress Subject Headings (LCSH) that some consider problematic (for a variety of reasons). Opinions will vary about what constitutes a "problem heading"; this may include offensive terminology, headings that aren't clear, headings that inappropriately conflate multiple ideas, or terminology that's not commonly used/understood. Your institution should decide which terms are most appropriate for your users, in collaboration with any communities impacted by the choice of terminology.

Home Glossary Resources Workshops & Services Blog Heritage x Palestine

Cultural Heritage Terminology Network
Working to decolonise the language of the heritage sector

G Glossary   ✉ Mailing list   ⊖ Donate

Welcome to CHTNUK

Founded by Carissa Chew in 2021, the Cultural Heritage Terminology Network promotes cross-institutional collaboration on inclusive description issues and open access to inclusive description resources. If you are looking for practical guidance on how to identify and address the presence of harmful imagery and discriminatory language across heritage collections, catalogues, websites, and exhibitions, you are in the right place!

WIKIPEDIA
The Free Encyclopedia

A community of care

- Your catalog is a community
- Inclusive description is a way of expressing care for our communities

Visitors

Curators

Staff

Researchers

CATALOG

Donors

People Represented

Administrators

PROJECT EXAMPLES

- ST. LOUIS ART MUSEUM

- ARAB IMAGE FOUNDATION

- CURATIONIST

St. Louis Art Museum, Fall 2022

- Encyclopedic art museum

- Add meaningful, useful, & respectful identity metadata to records for artists & makers

- Two days of listening sessions

- Three documents:
  - Cataloging Statement of Ethics
  - Constituent Cataloging Guide
  - Work Plan
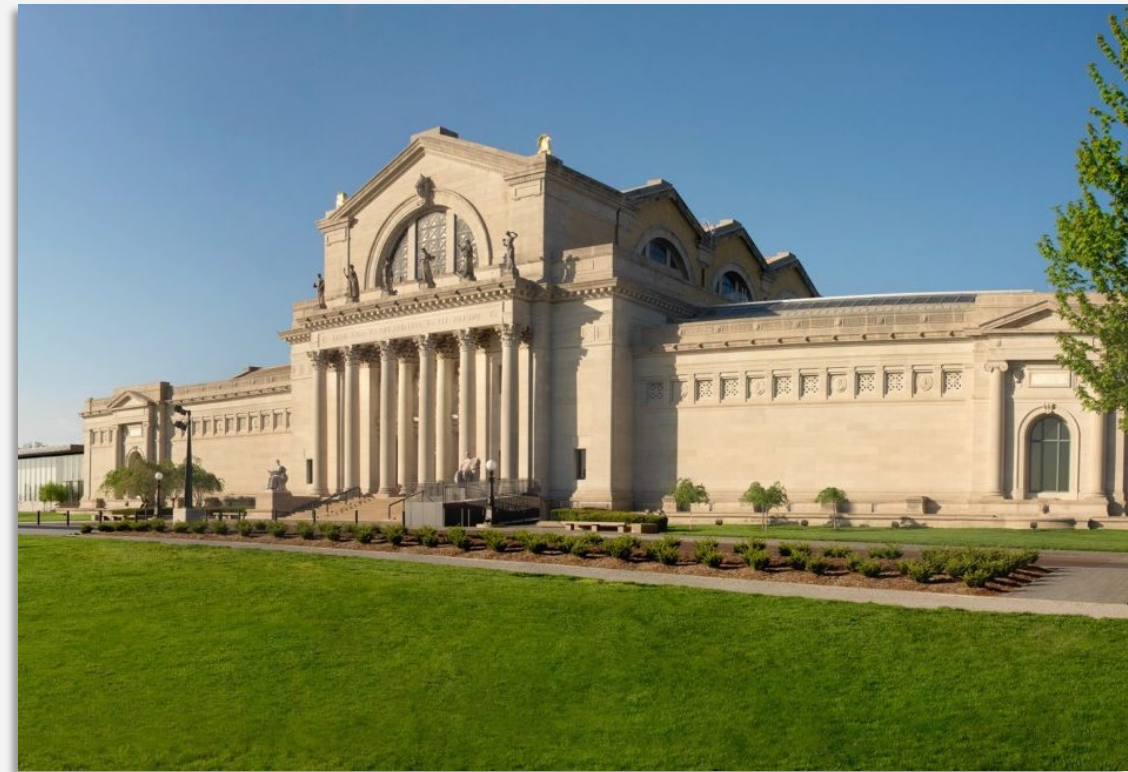
SLAM:
"Hybrid" vocabularies for identity facets

Local vocabularies composed of terms from:

- Getty AAT
- Getty TGN
- Getty ULAN
- Homosaurus
- Library of Congress Demographic Group Terms
- Wikidata

Use AAT for most categories, except:

Ability & Disability	Wikidata
Gender / Pronouns / Sexual Orientation	Homosaurus
Geography	TGN
Race	LCDGT & Wikidata

SLAM:
Notes & updates

Notes:

- Terms added as needed

- Using AAT for people

- "Of interest to"

Updates:

- Added 91,000 data points!

- ~80% of artist records have been updated

- Continued evolution:
  - Outdated/problematic terminology
  - Veteran status
  - Ability/Disability: "chronic conditions"

- Increased visibility of certain groups

Word cloud for "ethnicity" category. Courtesy of St. Louis Art Museum

Arab Image Foundation, Summer 2023

- Photographers' association with a collection dating back to the origins of photography

- Vernacular photography in the region

- Three-day workshop in Beirut, Lebanon

- Develop cataloging practices & the structure for a custom vocabulary
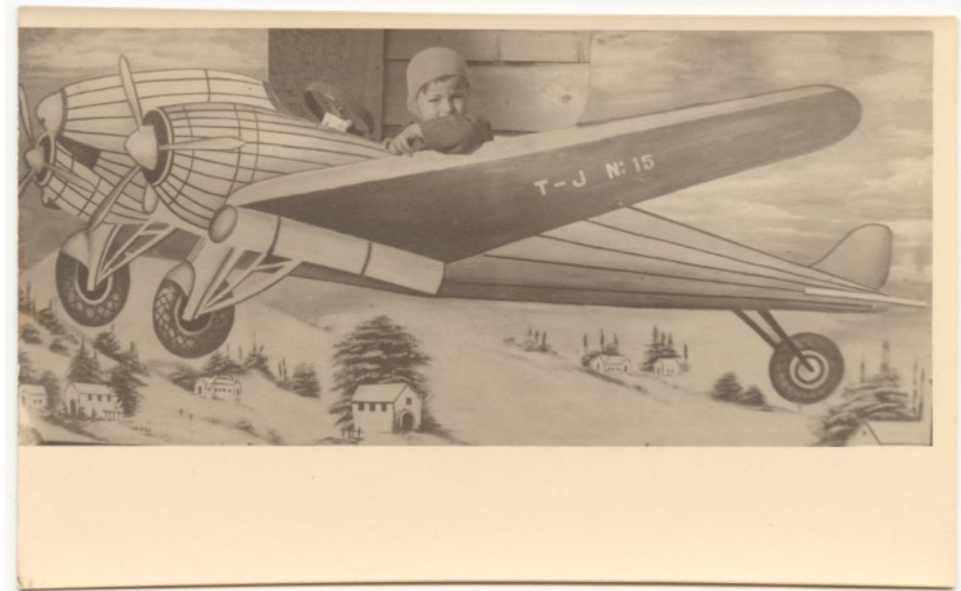
0026do - Bedros Doumanian Collection. Courtesy of the Arab Image Foundation.

Image: Screenshot of the Arab Image Foundation homepage, September 25, 2024.

AIF:
Issues with controlled vocabularies

- Use AAT for mediums, materials, & techniques

- Different categories of description/hierarchy

- Local needs more important than sharing widely

- Different ways of working together

Guide Term Level 1 (Do not use)	Term (Level 1)	Term (Level 2)	Term (Level 3)	Synonyms (Do not use)	Related Term (RT)
Forms of Oppression					
	capitalism				neoliberalism
		climate disaster			
		economic collapse			
		exploitation			
		unhoused		homeless	
		poverty			
		privatization			
			gentrification		
	colonialism				
		apartheid			
		colonial gaze			
		dispossession			
		invasion			
		occupation			
		orientalism			white supremacy
		settler colonialism			
			settlements		
	dictatorship				
	ethnic persecution				
	fascism				
	genocide				
		blockade			
		ethnic cleansing			
		starvation			
	homophobia				
	neoliberalism				capitalism
		privatization			
			gentrification		
	patriarchy				
		femicide			
	racism				

Image: Screenshot of portion of "Forms of Oppression" category in the AIF vocabulary. Courtesy of Arab Image Foundation.

Curationist, Summer, 2024

- Open access museum aggregator

  - Public domain, CC0 & CC-BY

  - Nine institutions; 4.4 million records

  - Content creator; social justice agenda

- Wikidata integration research

  - API or Wikibase?

- A vocabulary can be *too* big and *too* open

Image: Screenshot of the Curationist website, October 8, 2024.
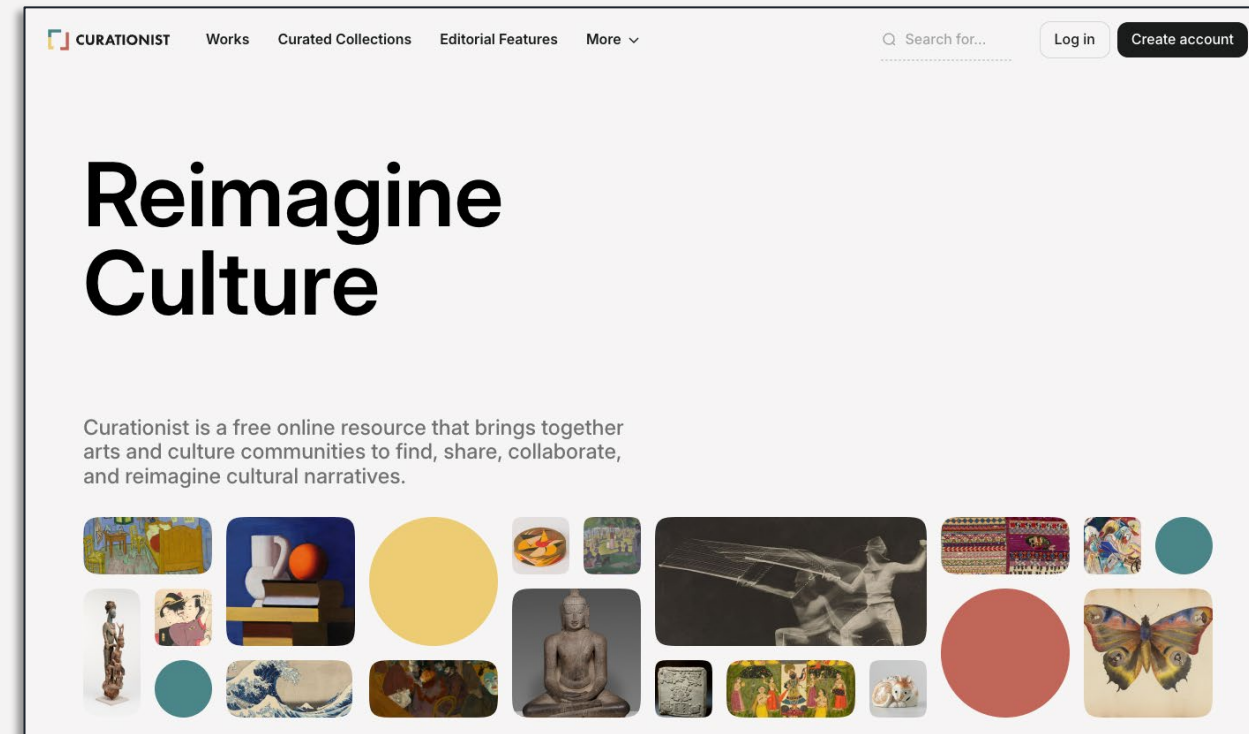
HOW CAN VOCABULARIES SUPPORT INCLUSIVE DESCRIPTION?

- Greater diversity of sources

- What about Wikidata?

- Lessons from Indigenous data governance

- Vocabularies are scaffolding

More diverse sources

- Authoritative (?) *and* representative

- Contributors *and* sources

- Open avenues for feedback and listening

- Multilingual

- Polyhierarchical

AAT: Room for expansion?

Image: Screenshots of portions of the Getty Art & Architecture Thesaurus, October 8, 2024.

Will everything just become Wikidata?

- How can vocabularies be more timely?

- How do we balance control with connection?

- What if interoperability isn't the goal?

Lessons from Indigenous data governance

FAIR *and* CARE principles

- **C**ollective benefit
- **A**uthority to control
- **R**esponsibility
- **E**thics

Local Contexts

- Traditional Knowledge Labels & Notices

DATA PRINCIPLES

	INDIGENOUS			MAINSTREAM		
New Zealand Indigenous Data Sovereignty Principles	**Australia Indigenous Data Sovereignty Protocols**	**United States Indigenous Data Governance Principles**	**Canada Indigenous Data Governance Principles**	**Open Data Charter Principles**	**FAIR Principles for Data Management and Stewardship**	**STREAM Properties for Industrial and Commoditized Data**
Authority	Self-Determination	Inherent Sovereignty	OCAP®	Open By Default	Findable	Sovereign
Relationships	Available and Accessible	Indigenous Knowledge	Indigenous Knowledge	Timely and Comprehensive	Accessible	Trusted
Obligations	Collective Rights and Interests	Ethics	Methodology and Approaches	Accessible and Usable	Interoperable	Reusable
Collective Benefit	Accountability	Intergenerational Collective Wellbeing	Evidence to Build Policy	Comparable and Interoperable	Reusable	Exchangeable
Reciprocity	Exercise Control	Relationships	Ethical Relationships	For Improved Governance & Citizen Engagement		Actionable
Guardianship			Data Governance	For Inclusive Development and Innovation		Measurable

People oriented principles	Purpose oriented principles	Data oriented principles

Vocabularies are scaffolding— go out on a limb!

- No one vocabulary can be everything to everybody – not even Wikidata

- Legacy language will always be an issue

- Better right than standard

- Description is always evolving – we are never done

Image: HK Arun, CC BY-SA 3.0 , via Wikimedia Commons. Image has been cropped.

THANK YOU!
QUESTIONS & COMMENTS?

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ARTchivist's
Notebook