Archive of the March 8, 2022 #critlib chat on the Library of Congress Subject Heading "Illegal immigration," moderated by @LibFeminista. For more info about critlib, including past and future chats, visit critlib.org.

The next #critlib chat will be Tuesday July 19 (6 pm Pacific, 7 pm Mountain, 8 pm Central, 9 pm Eastern). Moderator @LibFeminista will guide a discussion about the "Illegal immigration" #LCSH and the ongoing campaign to get libraries to #DropTheIWord.

critlib.org/libraries-drop...

hey #critlib folks! we are gonna get started--please introduce yourself! I'll go!

Read the full conversation on Twitter
Ms. T. Mo. @LibFeminista · Jul 20, 2022

hey #critlib folks! we are gonna get started--please introduce yourself! I'll go!

Ms. T. Mo. @LibFeminista · Follow

my name is teresa (she/her), i am an academic librarian in Xicago + today is my cat hank's 10th bday! i come to the convo at the intersection of having done work with daca students +families and as a library worker. #critlib

1:00 AM · Jul 20, 2022

Violet Fox @violetbfox · Follow

Thanks @LibFeminista for moderating tonight's #critlib chat. Hello everyone, I'm Violet, an academic/medical library worker/cataloger in Chicago.

You can also find tonight's chat questions at critlib.org/libraries-drop...

1:02 AM · Jul 20, 2022

Also, a reminder! If you would like to tweet anonymously, you can use the critlib anonymous Twitter relay found at critlib.org/anon/. You (and everyone else following the #critlib hashtag) will then see your tweet posted via the @CritLib_anon account.

1:00 AM · Jul 20, 2022
Ms. T. Mo. @LibFeminista · Follow

What language does your library (or your local public/university library) use to describe resources about undocumented immigrants? #critlib
1:05 AM · Jul 20, 2022

Allison @read_away · Follow

Hi all, I'm Allison an academic library worker from San Diego. #critlib
1:06 AM · Jul 20, 2022

Gina “Rethink Normal” Murrell @GinaMurrell1 · Follow

Hi #critlib! I'm Gina, librarian in New York City, joining in tonight.
1:06 AM · Jul 20, 2022

Ms. T. Mo. @LibFeminista · Follow

i will be honest, i didn't realize until recently how much libraries can do on a local level, so i am not entirely sure! but i'm interested in finding out! #critlib
1:08 AM · Jul 20, 2022
A1. Grateful to be at a system where they've already switched the terminology to "Undocumented immigrants" in the display, well before I arrived last month. #critlib

1:08 AM · Jul 20, 2022

25ReplyCopy link

A1. My library uses the terms “noncitizens” and “undocumented immigration.” #critlib

Ms. T. Mo. @LibFeminista

What language does your library (or your local public/university library) use to describe resources about undocumented immigrants? #critlib

1:10 AM · Jul 20, 2022

2ReplyCopy link

i will be honest, i didn't realize until recently how much libraries can do on a local level, so i am not entirely sure! but i'm interested in finding out! #critlib

Violet Fox @violetbfox · Follow

You can find out by doing a keyword search in your library's catalog for "undocumented immigrants," then looking at the subject headings in those catalog records. #critlib

1:10 AM · Jul 20, 2022

4ReplyCopy link

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Our libraries (consortium) are using primarily LCSH terms; however, we are transforming the display and adding in MESH terms so undocumented immigrants can be searched and the word illegal does not display as a subject heading.

#critlib

1:10 AM · Jul 20, 2022

Violet Fox @violetbfox
Replying to @LibFeminista
You can find out by doing a keyword search in your library's catalog for "undocumented immigrants," then looking at the subject headings in those catalog records.

#critlib

1:12 AM · Jul 20, 2022

Violet Fox @violetbfox · Follow
So here's what my catalog's record looks like, with the "Undocumented immigrants" wording (and no "Illegal immigrants" heading). Some libraries' catalogs will have both terms, some will have one or the other.

#critlib
Ms. T. Mo. @LibFeminista · Follow

Do you think LC's changes are sufficient? Why or why not? #critlib

1:12 AM · Jul 20, 2022

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Tina Gross @aboutness · Follow

Hi #critlib, I'm a bit late, just got home from work. Tina, academic cataloger in Moorhead, MN

1:15 AM · Jul 20, 2022

Read 1 reply
A2. I've talked a lot about how I (and others!) were disappointed with the replacement term "Illegal immigration". The whole campaign to change the original offensive heading was called #DropTheIWord, so it feels pretty bad that LC kept the "i word" (that is, "illegal." #critlib

Ms. T. Mo. @LibFeminista
Do you think LC's changes are sufficient? Why or why not? #critlib

1:15 AM · Jul 20, 2022

Read the full conversation on Twitter

Dr. Lori Miller @LoriMMiller · Follow

For #critlib tonight: I'm eavesdropping even though I no longer work in libraryland. I'm Lori, and I work in research compliance - an IRB office. I try to advise researchers working with immigrant populations to use language consistent with the tenet of respect for persons.

1:15 AM · Jul 20, 2022
A2. I do not think LC's changes are sufficient. The word illegal is still in one of the headings, the bifurcation makes it harder for libraries to address the issue via transformations, and most patrons aren't going to search for noncitizens. #critlib
A2. I've talked a lot about how I (and others!) were disappointed with the replacement term "Illegal immigration". The whole campaign to change the original offensive heading was called #DropTheIWord, so it feels pretty bad that LC kept the "i word" (that is, "illegal." #critlib

Ms. T. Mo. @LibFeminista
Do you think LC's changes are sufficient? Why or why not? #critlib

Violet Fox @violetbfox
A2. (cont.) I helped draft this statement from PCC (the Program for Cooperative Cataloging) to talk about how this replacement terminology is a real disappointment. twitter.com/violetbfox/sta... #critlib

Violet Fox @violetbfox
New statement from Program for Cooperative Cataloging (PCC) DEI Advisory Committee regarding the replacement of "Illegal aliens" in #LCSH, encouraging member institutions to explore avenues for reducing reliance on a single controlled vocabulary. listserv.loc.gov/cgi-bin/wa?A2=... #critcat

1:17 AM · Jul 20, 2022

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A2. LC's changes were merely window dressing. They definitely didn't go far enough. The fact that “illegal” is still used in a subject heading (“illegal immigration”) is highly problematic. No human being is illegal. #critlib

Ms. T. Mo. @LibFeminista
Do you think LC's changes are sufficient? Why or why not? #critlib

1:20 AM · Jul 20, 2022

Allison @read_away · Jul 20, 2022
A2. I do not think LC's changes are sufficient. The word illegal is still in one of the headings, the bifurcation makes it harder for libraries to address the issue via transformations, and most patrons aren't going to search for noncitizens. #critlib

Violet Fox @violetbfox · Follow
Yes to all of this! @aboutness talks a lot about how much harder LC's replacement terms make doing the right thing for libraries; instead of a relatively simple 1:1 change, there's more review required with the change from "Ill*g*l aliens" to "Ill*g*l immigration". #critlib

1:20 AM · Jul 20, 2022
A2. I was disappointed by the retention of "illegal." Honestly, I don't even believe that LC thinks this was the best choice, I think it was a concession made in hopes of warding off right-wing anti-immigrant bashlash. #CritLib

1:21 AM · Jul 20, 2022

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And that always works, right? Those forces are so easily appeased, you give them an inch and they back off! <obvious sarcasm> #CritLib

1:22 AM · Jul 20, 2022

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Yes to all of this! @aboutness talks a lot about how much harder LC's replacement terms make doing the right thing for libraries; instead of a relatively simple 1:1 change, there's more review required with the change from "Illeg*aliens" to "Illeg*immigration". #critlib

1:23 AM · Jul 20, 2022

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(trying to avoid catching the attention of jerks in this discussion with the use of asterisks, but it might be a losing battle 😒) #critlib
Q3: How does LC's status as a federal agency play into this situation? What are the key issues that this complication causes? #critlib

1:23 AM · Jul 20, 2022

Violet Fox @violetbfox · Follow

#critlib

Ms. T. Mo. @LibFeminista

A2. I was/am honestly disappointed. It feels like they were trying to "meet in the middle", but it's personally hard for me to do that when we are talking about people's humanity.

1:24 AM · Jul 20, 2022
A3. Well they're very afraid of a certain TX senator, I'll tell you what. From my perspective, it seems like this decision is based entirely on what will not catch the attention of the Zodiac Killer.
#critlib

Ms. T. Mo. @LibFeminista
Q3: How does LC's status as a federal agency play into this situation? What are the key issues that this complication causes?
#critlib

1:26 AM · Jul 20, 2022

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A3. I think @aboutness is right and the revision and chosen terms were a concession.
#critlib

1:27 AM · Jul 20, 2022
A3. Well they're very afraid of a certain TX senator, I'll tell you what. From my perspective, it seems like this decision is based entirely on what will not catch the attention of the Zodiac Killer. #critlib

Ms. T. Mo. @LibFeminista
Q3: How does LC's status as a federal agency play into this situation? What are the key issues that this complication causes? #critlib

Violet Fox @violetbfox · Follow
And, of course, that senator got mad anyway, and wrote an angry letter anyway. #critlib (Sorry about his face in your timelines. 😏)
nbcnews.com/news/latino/se...
A3. Sorry to get "political" (or partisan, I guess), but I often think that LC acts like centrists in the Democratic Party. They are so very risk averse, it limits (and defines) what they're able to do. To the point that it seems like the actual strategy. #CritLib

1:29 AM · Jul 20, 2022

Ms. T. Mo.
@LibFeminista · Follow

A3: I think it's important for us to really remember that how the LoC uses language is incredibly important b/c it is an articulation of the US. that is to say it will dictate discourse and policy. #critlib

1:30 AM · Jul 20, 2022

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Ms. T. Mo. @LibFeminista

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Ms. T. Mo. @LibFeminista · Follow

they are really are telling on themselves, and it feels important to both fight that, but also understand that it is a reflection of something we don't like to admit about our country and gov. #critlib

1:30 AM · Jul 20, 2022

Violet Fox @violetbfox · Follow

Remember you can find all of tonight's #critlib questions at critlib.org/libraries-drop.... If you'd like to post anonym*usly, you can use the form at critlib.org/anon/.

1:30 AM · Jul 20, 2022
A3. LC was established as “the research arm of Congress.” Being such, as a federal institution serving this purpose, it’s inherently political. This impacts what terms, what subject headings, are designated as official or legitimate, depending on the political climate. #critlib

Q3: How does LC’s status as a federal agency play into this situation? What are the key issues that this complication causes? #critlib

Tina Gross · @aboutness
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Ms. T. Mo. · @LibFeminista · Follow
the LoC is inherently political, so no need to be sorry! I think this is a really good framing of how it is functioning within the political landscape! #critlib
they are really are telling on themselves, and it feels important to both fight that, but also understand that it is a reflection of something we don't like to admit about our country and gov. #critlib

Well said. You're right that it's a reflection of (and condemnation of) both the U.S. government priorities, and of the oppressive structures that librarianship reifies. I get a lot of "it's just words" feedback, but making this visible makes all of the rot visible too. #critlib

A3. I think that LC often torn/stuck between two sides of its role, the Congress side and the library side, both of which exert pressure and pull in different directions. #CritLib
Q4: What barriers might stand in the way of libraries making this change in their own institution? #critlib

1:36 AM · Jul 20, 2022

@LibFeminista

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#critlib 🔥🔥

Ms. T. Mo. @LibFeminista

100. and it's easy for it to be "just words" when they are words that have little to no impact on your own humanity or ability to just live freely.

1:37 AM · Jul 20, 2022

@violetbfox

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Tina Gross  ·  Jul 20, 2022
@aboutness
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Ms. T. Mo.  ·  Follow
i am not a cataloguer, so this may be off, but there seems to be a sort of irony on how the LoC is straddling two different functions or classifications of its job, and that stratification is often what is the hardest thing to capture in SH. (thinking hierarchies) #critlib
1:39 AM · Jul 20, 2022

Ms. T. Mo.  ·  Follow
A: 4 i’d say it was a combo of ppl power, the knowledge and research and good administration. #critlib
1:41 AM · Jul 20, 2022
A3. I think that LC often torn/stuck between two sides of its role, the Congress side and the library side, both of which exert pressure and pull in different directions. #CritLib

I've said this in other contexts, librarians should pressure them, demand better, rather than be "understanding" about their obligations to Congress. Not that we shouldn't acknowledge that reality, but it's our role to advocate for library users, not excuse LC. #Critlib

1:41 AM · Jul 20, 2022
A4. There's a lot that can get in the way of local changes! Fear of political pushback is a big one: by making this cowardly decision, LC made all the smaller, less resourced libraries make their own political calculation & decide if they can take the heat of revision. #critlib

Ms. T. Mo. @LibFeminista

Q4: What barriers might stand in the way of libraries making this change in their own institution? #critlib

1:41 AM · Jul 20, 2022
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Q4: What barriers might stand in the way of libraries making this change in their own institution? #critlib

The good news about that, though, is that we've heard of only one library (of the hundreds that have locally changed this heading) that faced any political pushback because they changed this heading, and even that was short and mild. #critlib
A4. I think for some libraries, LC is the be-all, end-all when it comes to this sort of thing, and there isn’t the room or the freedom to diverge from it. It forces others to have to make a really strong case for why new terms should be adopted. #critlib

Ms. T. Mo. @LibFeminista
Q4: What barriers might stand in the way of libraries making this change in their own institution? #critlib

1:41 AM · Jul 20, 2022

Violet Fox @violetbfox
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1:44 AM · Jul 20, 2022
A4. I have a lot of sympathy for libraries which lack the technical capacity to make this change locally, or which lack the personnel or know-how to make these changes. Staff cutbacks in #cataloging departments have devastated the capacity for doing this important work. #critlib

Ms. T. Mo. @LibFeminista
Q4: What barriers might stand in the way of libraries making this change in their own institution? #critlib

1:44 AM · Jul 20, 2022
99
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Q5. What would help you convince your library (or other libraries) to make this change? What kind of support would you like to see available to people interested in starting this discussion? #critlib

1:44 AM · Jul 20, 2022

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Allison @read_away · Follow
A4. The bifurcation makes it more difficult to address. Many libraries don't have the staffing or the know how. Also, there are so many vendor supplied records that libraries can't fix. #critlib

1:44 AM · Jul 20, 2022
55
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Read 1 reply
A4. Given the new headings adopted, one of the hardest things is that 1:1 replacement doesn't work, unless you're going to replace LC's "Illegal immigration" with "Unauthorized immigration" (or another term for the activity/action, rather than a group of people). #CritLib

A5. In terms of support, I think it's important for libraries to share their solutions, be it code, normalization, etc. #critlib
Ms. T. Mo. @LibFeminista · Follow

this is a really great point i hadn't entirely thought through myself! #critlib

Tina Gross @aboutness

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1:49 AM · Jul 20, 2022
Gina “Rethink Normal” Murrell
@GinaMurrell1 · Follow

A5. I've been hearing more about SACO funnels. Though I'm not a cataloger, I've been doing more metadata work lately, and what SACO funnels are working toward increasingly interests me. I'll likely get sucked into a funnel (or two) at some point.
loc.gov/aba/pcc/saco/f... #critlib

Ms. T. Mo. @LibFeminista

Q5. What would help you convince your library (or other libraries) to make this change? What kind of support would you like to see available to people interested in starting this discussion? #critlib

1:49 AM · Jul 20, 2022

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Read 2 replies
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loc.gov/aba/pcc/saco/... #critlib

Ms. T. Mo. @LibFeminista

Q5. What would help you convince your library (or other libraries) to make this change? What kind of support would you like to see available to people interested in starting this discussion? #critlib

A5.2 Also, at individual libraries, reparative description groups are popping up, and involvement in these groups - especially if they connect systemwide - is support for people doing this work. #critlib
Ms. T. Mo. @LibFeminista

i just learned about SACO funnels today thanks to @violetbfox! and they do seem like a great way to get started!

1:53 AM · Jul 20, 2022

Gina “Rethink Normal” Murrell @GinaMurrell1

Repeating to @GinaMurrell1

A5.2 Also, at individual libraries, reparative description groups are popping up, and involvement in these groups - especially if they connect systemwide - is support for people doing this work.

#critlib

Violet Fox @violetbfox

Yes! I'm really heartened by the continued interest in this work. I think we can make it part of our day-to-day work and not just a fad. #critlib

1:56 AM · Jul 20, 2022
#critlib i am terrible at adding the hashtag!

Ms. T. Mo. @LibFeminista
A5: one of the first things I think we need is our community, are patrons to 1. know about this and that 2. they have power to vocalize the change. this isn't just a library issue, and the more ppl we get at the table the better!

1:57 AM · Jul 20, 2022

Dai Newman @daibrarian
A5: I think just on a technical level, getting info out about how various ILS could automate changes like this would really help. A big barrier I hear is lack of time/resources to manually change things. #critlib

1:57 AM · Jul 20, 2022

Violet Fox @violetbfox
Thanks @LibFeminista for making this #critlib chat a possibility and thanks to everyone who was able to join us today, I appreciate you @GinaMurrell1 @aboutness @read_away!! Let me know if you think of good ways to promote/support this important work, and thank you for YOUR work!

1:59 AM · Jul 20, 2022
Thanks so much to you all for participating in this! So heartened to see folks interested and wanting to work toward change! Have a lovely night, stay safe, be good to each other! #critlib

Violet Fox @violetbfox
Thanks @LibFeminista for making this #critlib chat a possibility and thanks to everyone who was able to join us today, I appreciate you @GinaMurrell1 @aboutness @read_away!! Let me know if you think of good ways to promote/support this important work, and thank you for YOUR work!