Metadata Justice in Oklahoma Libraries & Archives

A virtual symposium hosted by UCO Chambers Library
July 20, 2023

Dedication

The 2023 symposium is dedicated to the courageous spirit of Ruth Brown

Ruth Brown
1891-1975

Welcome

Howdy!

We are honored and humbled that so many folks have shown interest in this event. If you're unfamiliar with Oklahoma beyond what you hear about in the news, we are excited for you to learn about the work our speakers are doing for our state's libraries. This year, you'll notice the dedication to the courageous spirit of Ruth Brown. She was an Oklahoma librarian who was unfairly terminated from her position at the Bartlesville Public Library in 1950. Her crime? Daring to subscribe to subversive publications with library funds, but it's widely believed this was a cover story for her off-hours activities of supporting the Black community through organized groups and inviting her Black neighbors to church and diners. The Metadata Justice in Oklahoma Libraries and Archives Symposium directly reflects the work of Ruth Brown — doing what you can right where you are to further matters of justice and equity.

Our state's library association recognizes programming that addresses issues of social concern as they impact libraries, library collections, and the communities serviced by these libraries with the Ruth Brown Memorial Award. This past spring, we were humbled to be the 2023 recipient for last year's symposium. This award comes with a cash prize, which we immediately knew would be best used for a keynote speaker for the upcoming symposium. Although winning awards isn't why we do this work or host this event, we are extremely grateful that this award has allowed you all to hear from Suzette Chang today. Suzette is a wonderfully kind person who has not only worked in libraries and museums but is also doing ground-breaking work with Thick Descriptions, a non-profit that disrupts traditional educational methods with anthropology. Why "thick descriptions," you wonder? From their website: *A "thick description" reaches beyond a group or stereotype often assigned to a person and provides a full, humanizing illustration of an individual. Each person is more than a categorization.* The work we're doing with metadata justice strives for accurately describing library and archival materials in a way so that our communities can find materials about marginalized groups and their experiences, and the concept of a "thick description" aligns beautifully with that goal.

Thank you to everyone who made this event possible: our speakers, our attendees, and our library administration who has stood behind us every step of the way. This is important work, and it is an honor to bring you an affordable day of education and networking so that we can all move forward together.

The 2023 MJOKLA Planning Team
Shay Beezley, Anona Earls, Oliver Ellington, Kaitlyn Palone, Heather Scheele-Clark

Code of Conduct

Adapted from Oklahoma Library Association's Code of Conduct

We are dedicated to providing a harassment-free experience for everyone, regardless of gender, gender identity and expression, sexual orientation, disability, physical appearance, body size, race, or religion. **Harassment will not be tolerated in any form.** Harassment includes offensive verbal comments related to gender, gender identity and expression, sexual orientation, disability, physical appearance, body size, race, religion, sexual images in public spaces, deliberate intimidation, stalking, harassing photography or recording, sustained disruption of programs, inappropriate physical contact, and unwelcome sexual attention. Harassment and sexist, racist, or exclusionary jokes are not appropriate for this event. Anyone asked to stop any harassing behavior is expected to comply immediately. Anyone violating these rules may be sanctioned or expelled from the event.

To report violations, please contact Shay Beezley
sbeezley@uco.edu or 405-974-2918

Land Acknowledgment

The University of Central Oklahoma recognizes that we gather on land entrusted to the care and protection of the Caddo and Wichita peoples. These lands are part of the wider state of Oklahoma which is shared by the 39 sovereign Indigenous Nations including the Kiowa, Comanche, Osage, Apache and Fort Sill Apache Nations, and is associated with the forced relocation of Nations through the Indian Removal Act of 1830. The university was built in Unassigned Land within seized portions of Indian Territory taken from the Cherokee, Choctaw, Chickasaw, Creek, and Seminole Nations by the federal government in 1866. Beginning in 1889, this land was distributed through several Land Runs intended to confine and erase Indigenous peoples from this territory. We acknowledge the historical events that have and continue to affect Indigenous people of this land. We pledge to honor and respect Indigenous knowledges and worldviews as we sustain a meaningful relationship with the Sovereign Nations.

Schedule

Note: schedule times are approximate. Schedule may shift slightly during the event.

9:25-9:30 AM	Welcome
9:30-10:10 AM	Everyone Belongs Here: Creating an Inclusive Public Library Local History and Genealogy Collection
10:10-10:50 AM	Perspectives from SACO Funnel Coordinators
10:50-11:00 AM	Break
11:00-11:45 AM	Constructing a Values-Based Foundation for Metadata Justice Work
11:45 AM-1:00 PM	Lunch Break
1:00-1:40 PM	The Creation of the Tribal Nations of Oklahoma Metadata Database
1:40-2:20 PM	The Fus Fixico Classification System
2:20-2:30 PM	Break
2:30-3:00 PM	Beyond Exploitation: Metadata Justice and Prison Labor
3:00-3:30 PM	Keynote: Politeness AND Executing Inclusive Metadata within Oklahoma Libraries & Archives

Please send us feedback!

The post-event evaluation survey is available [here](#)

AM Program

9:25-9:30 AM

Welcome & Opening Remarks

Shay Beezley (she/her), Assistant Director of Metadata & Cataloging, leads a team of six full-time catalogers and four student employees in ensuring discoverability of library resources at University of Central Oklahoma's Chambers Library. Her professional interests include MARC data remediation, ethics in cataloging and classification, and providing access to special collections and regional resources. Additionally, she serves in various leadership capacities for the Oklahoma Library Association and the Ex Libris Users of North America. She received her MSLS from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

9:35-10:05 AM

Everyone Belongs Here: Creating an Inclusive Public Library Local History and Genealogy Collection

The Chickasha Public Library maintains a local history and genealogy print collection that is currently being cataloged and organized. This presentation will give an overview of the process involved in creating original records with accurate and inclusive metadata and descriptions that reflect the history, perspective, and experiences of diverse groups so that all people can see both themselves and others accurately reflected in the collection.

Michelle Skinner is the reference librarian at the Chickasha Public Library in Chickasha, Oklahoma, as well as a piano teacher and pianist and organist at the First Presbyterian Church. She has a Bachelor of Arts from the University of Science and Arts of Oklahoma, where she serves on the Alumni Association Board of Directors, and a Master of Library and Information Studies from the University of Oklahoma. Michelle has written and presented extensively about many of her favorite library topics, including library history, digitization, and history preservation, and she loves all things creative and intellectual.

10:05-11:05AM

Perspectives from SACO Funnel Coordinators

Last year's symposium attendees learned from our colleagues at the University of Oklahoma about the work that went into requesting reconsideration of the original LCSH "Tulsa Race Riot" to "Tulsa Race Massacre"; however, returning attendees and our newcomers may be wondering more about the kind of work that goes into creating subject heading proposals for terminology that would equitably advance patron access to library materials. Representatives from the African-American Subject Funnel, Comics and Fiction Funnel, Gender and Sexuality Funnel, and the Latin American and Indigenous Peoples of the America (LAIPA) Funnel will discuss their experiences leading these funnel projects and answer questions from the audience.

Margaret Breidenbaugh (she/her), one of three co-chairs of the Gender and Sexuality SACO Funnel, is Resource Sharing Coordinator at Cincinnati State Technical and Community College in Cincinnati, Ohio, and a member of SEIU (Service Employees International Union) Local 1099. Margaret began working with information in academic libraries, public libraries, archives and special collections, and museums in 2014. She earned her MA in Modern German Social History at Miami University in Oxford, Ohio in 2018, and is a current MLIS student at the Luddy School of Informatics, Computing, and Engineering. In May 2023, Margaret traveled to Helsinki, Finland, to participate in a grant-funded DEI seminar which she helped to organize. Her research interests — critical cataloging, women's travel writing, gendered language, and the language of surveys — interrogate the power of words.

What is a SACO Funnel?

A SACO funnel is a group of libraries (or catalogers from various libraries) that have joined together to contribute subject authority records. More information about SACO funnels is available [here](#).

Michelle Cronquist is a Special Collections Cataloger at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. She has served as Cataloging Co-chair of the African American Subject Funnel Project since 2021.

Maya Espersen (she/they) is one of three co-chairs of the Gender and Sexuality SACO Funnel and is the Cataloging Coordinator for the Aurora (Colorado) Public Library since November 2021. Maya previously worked in academic libraries for ten years before moving to Colorado and to public libraries. They received their MLIS from the University at Albany, SUNY in 2012. Her interests include reparative cataloging, gendered language, graphic novels and manga, accessibility, sustainable gardening and agriculture, and cats.

Sara Levinson has been the cataloger in Latin American and Iberian languages at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill since 2009. As part of her work she creates original bibliographical records and name authority records, and proposes subject authority records to the Library of Congress. She was involved in the creation of, and is the coordinator of the Latin American and Indigenous Peoples of the Americas (LAIPA) SACO funnel which was formed in 2017.

Deborah Tomaras is the Metadata and Resource Management Librarian at Marist College. She's the former co-chair of the ALA Graphic Novels and Comics Roundtable's Metadata & Cataloging Committee, and one of the inaugural coordinators for the NACO/SACO Comics and Fiction Funnel. She enjoys proposing terms to help better depict diversity in comics, including subjects like "Superheroes with disabilities" and genres like "Indigenous futurisms comics."

10:50-11:00AM

Break

11:00-11:45AM

Constructing a Values-Based Foundation
for Metadata Justice Work

In this group activity, participants will have the chance to explore the values and principles that might inform their approach to metadata justice work, cross-pollinate ideas with others hoping to engage in this work, as well as work through key components of a guiding document. Participants will walk away with a framework for building their own values-based foundation for metadata justice work, based on an example of a thoroughly constructed guiding document. Whether you're interested in pursuing this work as an individual, within a group, or more broadly at your institution, this session will help ensure your future work is approached in a values-based and sustainable way.

Bailey Hoffner is the Metadata Librarian for Digital Resources and Discovery Services at Oklahoma State's Edmon Low Library. In her own research and creative work, she is interested in investigating ways in which metadata and descriptive practices have the power to uphold or dismantle the structural racism, sexism, able-ism, and discrimination inherent in their creation and use, with a particular interest in the representation of Autistic experience in libraries and library metadata.

Thank you to our volunteer discussion group leaders!

Karie Antell, University of Oklahoma
Jenny Bodenhamer, Oklahoma State University
Melissa Caines, Canadian College of Naturopathic Medicine
Katherine Chandler, University of Arkansas
Kirsten Davis, University of Central Oklahoma

Violet Fox, Northwestern University
Megan Macken, Oklahoma State University
Ginessa Mahar, University of Florida
Devon Olson, University of North Dakota
Liz Wallace, University of Central Oklahoma

11:45AM-1:00PM

Lunch Break

PM Program

1:00-1:40PM

The Creation of the Tribal Nations of Oklahoma Metadata Database

In the closing discussions of last year's symposium the impromptu creation of the Metadata Justice Collective occurred. Those that volunteered to chair, Megan Macken, Lulu Zilinskas, and Kaitlyn Palone, met shortly thereafter about possible projects that could use collaborative work. Megan presented the idea to create a database of Oklahoma Tribal Nation preferred names. We will be presenting on how this work was accomplished, problems we encountered, and our plans for the future.

Kaitlyn Palone received her MLIS from the University of Oklahoma in December of 2016. In January 2017 she began her position at the University of Central Oklahoma as a metadata and cataloging librarian. In her position she enjoys her work with the Oklahoma "Tornado" Funnel, and cataloging scores, but her most favorite is working with the Melton Zine Library. In her spare time she enjoys embroidery, watching movies, listening to music, and spending time with her family and two bad cats.

Megan Macken is the Assistant Department Head of Digital Resources and Discovery Services at Oklahoma State's Edmon Low Library where she oversees the metadata and cataloging units. Additionally, she serves as the liaison to the departments of Art, Art History and Graphic Design and is a member of the implementation team for Experts Directory, Oklahoma State's research information management (RIM) system. Previously she worked as a digital scholarship librarian and digital archivist and has master's degrees in Library Science and the History of Art from Indiana University.

Lulu Zilinskas (she/her) graduated in 2021 with her MSLS from UNC Chapel Hill and is currently Archivist I at the National Cowboy & Western Heritage Museum. She is also an early-career member for SAA's Committee on Research, Data, and Assessment. Previously, Lulu was the Graduate Research Assistant at the North Carolina Digital Heritage Center where she completed an equitable metadata research and remediation project for the Center's DAMS.

1:40-2:20PM

The Fus Fixico Classification System

Western cataloging systems organize information by subject and are created through a western lens. Indigenous communities organize information according to other factors, notably: cosmology, geography, language, and a sense of being. Our library created and actively uses the Fus Fixico ("Angry Bird" in Muskogee 'Creek' Language) Classification System (FFCS). FFCS is named after the Fus Fixico letters, which were written by Alexander Posey, a Muscogee Humorist, who served as secretary at the Sequoyah Constitutional Convention. FFCS borrows elements from the Brian Deer Classification System, Dewey, and Graph Theory to create a more inclusive system that empowers improved metadata and LoC subjects to thrive, while also still providing for user-friendly collocation.

After a decade of service in academic, public, and school tribal-rural libraries in northeastern Oklahoma, **Heather D. Hutto** earned her MSLS from the University of North Texas to address LIS vulnerabilities she recognized in her region. In her current role as a tribal-rural public library director, she tries to bridge Oklahoma's sizable digital inclusivity gaps, provide equitable representation and access, foster awareness about communities' understanding of libraries' roles in society, and other intersecting issues.

Although they were unable to present today, this presentation would not been possible without the contributions from co-authors **Justice Sweger** and **Amanda Harding**.

2:20-2:30 PM

Break

PM Program

2:30-3:00PM

Beyond Exploitation: Metadata Justice and Prison Labor

Large-scale digitization projects require enormous amounts of resources and labor, both of which are frequently in short supply in libraries and archives. How, then, has Oklahoma's Yearbook Project been able to scan and process high school yearbooks at no cost for schools, libraries, museums, and historical societies? As a service of Oklahoma Correctional Industries, a state-level prison industry program, the Yearbook Project relied on the penal labor exemption of the Thirteenth Amendment which allows for involuntary servitude to occur behind prison bars. Although the Yearbook Project is currently on hiatus due to an ongoing investigation, metadata specialists, cataloguers, and the wider memory work community must still grapple with the legacy of this and other exploitative and unethical programs that have contributed to the resources and services we offer patrons. This presentation sheds light on the issue of exploitative prison labor on behalf of libraries and archives, and offers a solution grounded in metadata justice: labeling items, collections, and databases that benefit from exploitative labor.

Kristen C. Howard is the Liaison Librarian for History, Classical Studies, Indigenous Studies, and Religious Studies at McGill University (Montreal, Canada). Kristen completed a PhD in History at the University of Arizona in 2020 and a Master of Information Studies at McGill in 2022. Her research interests include information and archival literacy, library ethics, and researchers' use of digital surrogates.

Acknowledgment

Keynote

3:00-3:30PM

Politeness AND Executing Inclusive Metadata within Oklahoma Libraries & Archives

As of 2018, Oklahoma ranked as the politest state in the country. This ranking speaks to a powerful intention. Often politeness and respect are defined as synonymous, but these words are not the same. During this humanity driven conversation, Suzette Chang, Founder/CEO of Thick Descriptions, an organization that disrupts traditional educational methods with anthropology to help humans thrive where they are building stronger communities, attendees will learn and discuss how politeness can be a barrier to accurately and respectfully describing materials related to underrepresented communities. Participants will laugh/smile/giggle/reflect and strategically think about how to be polite AND offer inclusive metadata.

Suzette V. Chang identifies and executes qualitative and contemporary educational methods. She weaves inquiry, curiosity, examination, and memorization as this collaboration yields humane and sustainable conclusions. A native Californian that calls Oklahoma home since 2002, Suzette is invested in competencies that speak to intra/interpersonal experiences grounded in trust, problem-solving, creativity, technology, observation, reflection, and enhanced learning. She supports lifelong learning for all and has developed and created these spaces in Venezuela, Jamaica, Kenya, Mexico, Canada, and the United States.

Suzette has served as an educational team member at the Metropolitan Library System, Sam Noble Museum, University of Oklahoma, the City of Guthrie and is the Founder/CEO of Thick Descriptions, a grassroots organization that disrupts traditional educational methods with anthropology. Suzette is an awarded and inspirational leader, speaker, contemporary education advocate and published author. Her literary contributions include "Nature Swagger," "Black Towns, Black Futures" and several articles. Suzette is the recipient of the 2022 Setha Low Engaged Anthropology Award and the 2021 William D. Pennington Teacher Award. Her biggest and most important investments are Taylor and Robert, her offspring that are currently new-adulting.

About Ruth Brown

Ruth Brown was born in Hiawatha, Kansas on July 26, 1891. She attended high school in California. While she spent summers attending the School of Library Service of Columbia University, she graduated from Northwestern State Normal School in Alva, Oklahoma in 1910 and the University of Oklahoma in Norman, Oklahoma in 1915. By 1919, she served as librarian at the Bartlesville Public Library, less than 20 miles from the Kansas border in the Cherokee Hills of northeastern Oklahoma.

Ruth Brown felt a true calling to her work. According to the Oklahoma Library Association (OLA), she became secretary of the OLA in 1920, then treasurer in 1926, and president in 1931. As OLA President during the Great Depression, she encouraged the membership in her address at the annual conference to "reduce to a minimum worry about lost books and other red tape." Brown provided materials, information, and access to citizens of Bartlesville during a time of racial segregation, and worked to win small gains for integration. Her many years in public service are noted by her dedication to bringing about racial justice and helping to form a group affiliated with the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE).

In response to Brown v. the Board of Education in 1948, and because the Communist Party had been active in support of racial equality in the 1930s, the public library discriminately fired Brown on July 25, 1950. Her so-called crime was using library funds to subscribe to Communist magazines, however, the city commission was upset about Brown's engagement in activities that furthered racial justice and threatened segregation. Days later, the "Friends of Miss Brown" campaign raised awareness to challenge the library's decision. About two hundred supporters appeared on August 7 to the city commission regarding Brown's firing. Supporters included the American Library Association and the American Civil Liberties Union. Brown contested her termination all the way up to the Oklahoma Supreme Court; however, she lost the suit against her former employer and relocated out of state. In 2007, Ruth Brown was recognized as a Oklahoma Library Legend.

Credits

Cover
1. (top left) Carnegie Library in Guthrie, Oklahoma - the first library in the Oklahoma territory, Library of Congress
2. (top middle) Outside of old Excelsior Library building, the first Black library in Oklahoma, Friends of the Excelsior Library Foundation
3. (top middle) Western History Collections at the University of Oklahoma
4. (top right) Entrance to the College of the Muscogee Nation campus library, photo taken by Shay Beezley in October 2022
5. (bottom left) - Max Chambers Library in the 1970s, graphic created by Heather Scheele-Clark, not for use without permission of UCO Archives & Special Collections
6. (bottom right) - Greetings from Oklahoma! postcard depicting the State Capitol and State Flower, Boston Public Library

Page 2
1. Ruth Brown Portrait, Oklahoma Library Association

Pages 7-13
All headshots provided by speakers

Page 14
1. Vintage postcard depicting Bartlesville Carnegie Library, Bartlesville Public Schools
2. Information about Ruth Brown, compiled by Oliver Ellington
   • Robbins, L. S. (1996). Racism and Censorship in Cold War Oklahoma: The Case of Ruth W. Brown and the Bartlesville Public Library. The Southwestern Historical Quarterly, 100(1), 18–46. http://www.jstor.org/stable/30240219
   • Oklahoma Library Legend

Please send us feedback!

The post-event evaluation survey is available here

Symposia information is archived on SHAREOK and our website.