Remediation of Harmful Language in GVSU Libraries Descriptive Data

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Metadata (or description data) is the language and structure used to describe library resources. Metadata can be found in library catalog records, database descriptions, database entries, and other forms of finding aids. Grand Valley State University Libraries acknowledges that metadata is not neutral. Neither is the creation and management of that metadata. We recognize the potential for bias in library resource metadata. We strive to keep up to date on changes in metadata schemes over time, but often this work lags regarding social justice. Metadata is often generated by outside entities and is based on long-standing systems and standards. These standards often maintain and perpetuate oppression, bias, and cultures of white supremacy and colonization. Other forms of bias in metadata can also include misogyny, sexism, ableism, and marginalization of sexual orientations and gender identities among other forms of oppression. We acknowledge the potential for harm in our descriptive data.

GVSU library commits to
- Questioning existing hierarchical and established standards which perpetuate bias by examining our own biases and supporting the use of alternative vocabularies.
- Keeping up to date with changing metadata standards.
- Make changes where we as a library have agency and provide alternative forms of description.
- When harmful language is the subject of the library material itself, we will review the metadata and work to put the language in a context that will allow for discovery at the same time acknowledging the bias.

If you find harmful or biased language in library metadata please report your concern via our "Report a Problem" page.

This statement is not intended to support requests for the removal of library resources. For more information on materials reconsideration, please see the Materials Reconsideration Policy.

This statement was inspired by similar statements from The University of Michigan, Yale University Library, and Duke University Library.