

Harmful Language Statement

Cataloging description is not neutral, nor are the individuals who create it. The library approaches collection description with the understanding that accuracy in language and description is at the core of treating the individuals and groups who create, use, and are represented in the collections we manage with dignity and respect. However, users may encounter harmful or offensive language for the following reasons:

- Many of our catalog records and finding aids were created years ago, and it is common practice to reuse language provided by creators, former owners, and vendors. Therefore, instances of harmful description may still appear.
- The library does not censor the materials in our care, but we aim to clarify instances where original language is retained by using quotation marks and/or by providing additional historical context.
- What constitutes appropriate description varies with context over time and is affected by the descriptive standards we apply.
- The library uses the Library of Congress Subject Headings (LCSH) to standardize subject searching across our catalog. Some LCSH terms are outdated and/or harmful and we support efforts to update and change these terms.
- The library strives for accuracy when making choices about what language to use when updating and/or writing new descriptions of the materials and the people and groups who created or are represented in them.
- The library recognizes that maintaining updated and accurate description is an ongoing process and that we may not always make the right decisions, so we encourage feedback from all sources so that we can learn and adjust our practices.
- The library uses a shared catalog with records being pulled from many sources and although the library does its best to eliminate harmful language other sources may not be as thorough.

If you encounter language in The Bennington Free Library catalog records, digitized collections, finding aids, exhibitions, or elsewhere that you find harmful or offensive, or if you have questions about this statement or about our work, please email catalog@bfli.org

Approved: May 2024