Lost in Aggregation
Towards Inclusive Metadata and Descriptive Practices in Digital Collections

DPLAFest 2017 - Working Session
Led by Dorothy Berry, University of Minnesota Libraries
Introductions
Mass Aggregation has opened the doors to accessible, representative digital collections building
About *Umbra Search*

- *Umbra Search African American History* seeks to make African American history more broadly accessible through various means:
  - A freely available [widget](#) and search tool, umbrasearch.org;
  - Digitizing African American materials across University of Minnesota collections;
  - Supporting students, educators, artists, and the public through residencies, workshops, and events locally and around the country.

- umbrasearch.org brings together more than 519,516 digitized materials from over 1000 libraries and archives across the country.

- *Umbra Search* is funded by the Institute of Museum and Library Services (development—site, partnerships, sustainability); Doris Duke Charitable Foundation (outreach and engagement); Council on Library and Information Resources (digitization and metadata).
About umbrasearch.org

*umbrasearch.org* brings together more than 519,516 digitized materials from over 1,000 libraries, archives, and cultural heritage institutions from across the country.

**Materials aggregated in *Umbra Search* represent:**

- Those that have been collected by libraries, archives, and cultural heritage institutions
- The specific selections that have, to date, been digitized and made openly available online.
Contributing Institutions
519,516 items from more than 1000 U.S. archives, libraries, and museums.

Get Started
Try some example searches to see what you can find in Umbra Search.

Discover and Share with #UmbraSearch
Exploring African American stories through digital projects by students, artists, and archivists.
17. Rosanna Wright, modeling African inspired clothing, at her clothing shop Bootstrings in Los Angeles, Calif., 1967

Keywords:
African American Business Enterprises; African American Businesspeople; African Americans; Business; California; Clothing Stores; Culture; Economic Conditions; Ethnic; Costume; Ethnic Identity; Los Angeles; Los Angeles County; People; Women; Women Owned Business Enterprises

@ UCLA, Library Special Collections, Charles E. Young Research Library

18. [Shop floor display of hats at The Fair department store, ca. 1930 : cellulose acetate photonegative, banquet camera format]
Scurlock Studio (Washington, D.C.)

Keywords:
African Americans; Clothing And Dress; Department Stores; Fair (Firm); Hats; Scurlock Studio (Washington, D.C.)

@ Archives Center - NMAH

19. [Shop floor display of lingerie at The Fair department store, ca. 1930 : cellulose acetate photonegative, banquet camera format]
Scurlock Studio (Washington, D.C.)

Keywords:
African Americans; Clothing And Dress; Department Stores; Fair (Firm); Scurlock Studio (Washington, D.C.)

@ Archives Center - NMAH
Rosanna Wright, modeling African inspired clothing, at her clothing shop Bootstrings in Los Angeles, Calif., 1967

Access to this collection is generously supported by Arcadia funds AFRICAN FASHION-
-Rosanna Wright, left, manages Bootstrings dress shop. Operation Bootstrap project
which features African fashions among Mod at 1038 W. Santa Barbara Ave. Gloria Buie
works in shop.

Type: Image
Format: 1 photograph
Contributors: University of California, Los Angeles. -- Library. -- Dept. of Special Collections (repository)/Coroner.
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Record Contributed By
UCLA Library Special Collections, Charles E. Young Research Library

Record Harvested From
California Digital Library
Rosanna Wright, modeling African inspired clothing, at her clothing shop Bootstrings in Los Angeles, Calif., 1967

Description
Access to this collection is generously supported by Arcadia funds. AFRICAN FASHION--Rosanna Wright, left, manages Bootstrings dress shop. Operation Bootstrap project which features African fashions among Mod at 1038 W. Santa Barbara Ave. Gloria Blue works in shop.

In collections
Los Angeles Times Photographs Collection
CLIR Digitization Grant

- Pulling from collections across UMN Archives and Special Collections
- Identifying hidden records related to African American history and creating an opportunity for discoverability and access
- Enhancing metadata and description, creating opportunities to rethink traditional methodology
- Almost 470,000 items identified, over 200,000 digitized to date
African American History in the Archives

- **Archival Description** — Lack of Standardization Makes Machine Understanding Challenges
- **Lack of Transferable Documentation** — Assumptions About Users Narrow Accessibility
- **Speedy Processing** — Low Budgets for Processing and Describing Level Underrepresented Histories in the Margins
Who are you and why are you interested in this session?
Defining Our Terms

Diversity
Representation of multiple experiences and identities

Inclusion
Active involvement of multiple experiences and identities

Equity
Equality of results for multiple experiences and identities
How do these concepts affect metadata creation?

Title Field. Subject Field. Enhanced Description. Crowdsourcing.
How do these concepts affect metadata creation in a mass aggregation landscape?
DPLA - Scalability

Innovations and radical change in cataloging and descriptive practice are possible.

How do these practices scale in a manner conducive to aggregatable cross-collection conversation?
1. Break Out

**Small Groups of 5-8:** Get together with people nearby and discuss and develop two principles and two actions for this working session

- **D.E.I**  
  Diversity, Equity, Inclusion

- **Micro/Macro**  
  What works in a single institution/What works across institutions

- **Collaboration**  
  Principles that can be discussed, honed, and shared
Principles Guide Actions
Discussing toward Consensus.
Break
Principles

1. Don't sanitize history by attempting neutrality in description
2. Equality of results is necessary: it should be as easy to find the records of marginalized people as those of people with power
3. Work across institutions so innovations and successes can be shared and implemented widely

Actions

1. Prioritize community contact and involvement for the development of controlled vocabularies and subject fields
2. Communicate necessity of inclusive metadata not just to other archivists, but to institutional administration and the public
3. Standardize inclusive metadata practices so they can be organized and taught
2. Break Out

Divide into Three Groups to Conceptualize Steps Towards These Actions

- Community Conversations
  - Front right

- Communicating Necessity
  - Back right

- Standardization
  - Back left
Community Contact

- Develop shareable tech tools to put power in community hands without requiring the increased funding/staffing for outreach that smaller institutions may not have.

- Prioritize community interaction through preexisting community events, meeting people where they are.

- Create transparency in community outreach by forming true ally/liaison relationships and valuing different ways of knowing.
Communicate Necessity

- Develop a statement of values needs to be created and agreed to across GLAM professional groups.

- Identify specifics of what sort of standards are desired and by whom (Metadata librarians? Community liaisons? Library Administrators?)

- Be open about how the issues of inclusive metadata are tied to the demographics of those in information fields overall and the need for both increased cultural competency training and increased racial/ethnic diversity in hires.
Standardizing Description

- Create expanded hierarchies of description that clarify terminology geographically and temporally
- Institute a transparency field marking how and why terminology is selected when describing marginalized peoples’ collections
- Make sure description is an iterative process so descriptions can be updated as understandings are updated
Final Thoughts

Overarching Messages.
Next Steps

Please Make Sure to Fill Out Sign-in Sheet

Email djberry@umn.edu for Google Group Invitation

- Shared Slides
- Group Notes
- Moving Forward
Thank you for participating!

Contact: djberry@umn.edu