

Harmful Language Statement

Created and updated in February 2023.

Potentially Harmful Content

The Concordia College Archives and the Carl B. Ylvisaker Library are home to thousands of freely available resources from many periods of time. In the archives and the library, there will be some content that may be harmful or difficult to view. As cultural institutions, it is our mission to collect and preserve materials and artifacts from the college's history and to make them available for research purposes. As a result, some of the content present in our collections may reflect biased, offensive, and possibly violent views and opinions that are reflective of the period and system of intolerance in which they were created. In addition, some of the content may relate to violent or graphic events and are preserved for their historical significance.

Potentially Harmful Language in Description

The Concordia College Archives and the Carl B. Ylvisaker Library make use of content descriptions, including finding aids, catalog records, and other metadata to improve access to our collections. We acknowledge that our existing descriptions may contain language that reflects biased and offensive terms that may cause harm. This language is the result of descriptions that were created over the years by creators of the collection material, previous stewards of the collections, or by previous archival and library staff before policies and standards were instituted to prevent the use of harmful language.

The archives and library also incorporate controlled vocabularies and thesauri, including the Library of Congress Subject headings, in our descriptions. Some of the headings in these vocabularies and thesauri are outdated and harmful. In some instances, original, creator- or steward-provided description holds inherent research value on the collection. However, these descriptions can equally reflect bias and prejudice and must be contextualized using descriptive notes that address why the description was left in its original submission state.

We recognize that identities are both socially constructed and fluid and that, over time, individuals and groups may self-identify differently. We acknowledge the value of modern user discovery needs and the value of historic terminologies. The Concordia College Archives and the Carl B. Ylvisaker Library are revisiting and updating descriptive language; however, given that we are a repository of thousands of descriptive records, this process is iterative and will take time.

Users

The review process applies only to the record descriptions and not the original content itself; original content will not be altered.

The Concordia College Archives and the Carl B. Ylvisaker Library encourage users to bring questions and concerns about description to the department's attention via email (askccref@cord.edu). Please include the following:

- Title, name of author, and description
- Call number
- A quote of the specific language you feel is harmful

- A suggested alternative if you have one

The archives and the library will determine whether or not we will change or remove terms from archival and library descriptions. We will weigh potential harm against considerations such as input from affected communities, accurate preservation of the historical record, professional best practices, and allocation of staff resources.

References

This statement is adapted from the statements of the following institutions.

Digital Public Library of America (DPLA). "DPLA's Statement on Potentially Harmful Content." <https://dp.la/about/harmful-language-statement>. Accessed on February 21, 2023.

U.S. National Archives and Records Administration (NARA). "NARA's Statement on Potentially Harmful Content." <https://www.archives.gov/research/reparative-description/harmful-content>. Accessed on February 21, 2023.

Tufts Archival Research Center (TARC). "TARC Statement on Potentially Harmful Language in Archival Description." <https://tarc.tufts.edu/about/policies/TARC-Statement-on-Potentially-Harmful-Language-in-Archival-Description>. Accessed on February 21, 2023.

Yale University Library. "Guide to Using Special Collections at Yale University: Statement on Harmful Language in Archival Description." <https://guides.library.yale.edu/specialcollections/statementondescription>. Accessed on February 21, 2023.