Book Review

Michael Fernandez, editor

Inclusive Cataloging: Histories, Context, and Reparative Approaches. Edited by Amber Billey, Elizabeth Nelson, and Rebecca Uhl. Chicago: ALA Editions, 2024. 296p. $64.99 softcover (ISBN 979-8-89255-566-1).

The introduction of *Inclusive Cataloging: Histories, Context, and Reparative Approaches* sets forth two aims: "to record the efforts of so many librarians who have worked to improve our systems and collections, as well as to inspire those who have yet to enact change that this work is scalable, possible, and necessary" (x). Editor Amber Billey observes that the "racial reckoning" brought on by the murder of George Floyd, combined with the pandemic forcing librarians to work from home, brought a sudden attention to "the bias and oppression found within our collections and organization systems" and fueled projects countering harmful past practices. Billey describes the summer of 2020 as a turning point: "We have experienced a shift within the profession" (xi). *Inclusive Cataloging* is about the projects that originated in that summer of upheaval.

But before delving into the case studies, the first third of the book is dedicated to the history and theory of inclusive cataloging. The audience is the cataloger or metadata specialist who is already familiar with the problems of existing library classification systems; problems are described, but the focus is primarily on solutions. Key milestones in the inclusive cataloging movement and special topics such as comics cataloging and accessibility metadata are discussed. Chapters 2, 3, and 4 survey the history of cataloging criticism from the 1930s onward, with all three placing Dorothy Porter Wesley at or very near the start of the timeline. These chapters are somewhat repetitive, covering the accomplishments of Wesley, Brian Deer, and Sandy Berman multiple times. I would have appreciated a longer examination of any of the historical cataloging movements described. The following chapters are more substantial, perhaps because they have the advantage of being about the here and now. Nonetheless, part 1 effectively introduces the major themes at the heart of the case study chapters.

Though few specific figures or statistics are provided, the sheer number and breadth of reparative cataloging projects described support Billey's assertion of a shift within the profession, starting in the mid-2010s and gaining strength in 2020. One of the most significant catalysts is the ongoing conflict over the subject headings "Aliens" and "Illegal aliens." These headings were finally replaced by the Library of Congress (LC) with "Noncitizens" and "Illegal immigration" in 2021, seven years after Dartmouth College students protested the original terms. In the intervening years, "hundreds" of libraries—many inspired by the documentary on the Dartmouth students' activism, *Change the Subject*—made local changes to these headings (54). The impact is visible throughout *Inclusive Cataloging*, with multiple case studies in part 2 citing the "Illegal aliens" heading and LC's inaction as an inspiration for institutional-level reparative cataloging projects. The authors of chapter 5, "Did Libraries Change the Subject?," proposed two American Library Association (ALA) resolutions that would have urged LC to change "Illegal aliens" to "Undocumented immigrants" and asked for increased transparency and staffing at the Policy, Training, and Cooperative Programs Division; neither was passed. Authors Jill E. Baron, Violet B. Fox, and Tina Gross state that the "quiet strategy" undertaken

by ALA's Public Policy and Advocacy office "likely deserves credit for bringing about the changes the Library of Congress implemented in December 2021," while also asserting that "the problematic and unsatisfactory nature of those changes is also tied to that strategy" (57). Their account complements the case studies on revising the controversial headings, providing an exceptionally detailed description of the highly charged political process that took place behind the scenes.

If the debate over "Illegal aliens" brought wider attention and awareness to offensive vocabulary in classification systems, the events of 2020 infused the situation with a new sense of urgency. More libraries convened working groups to "address problematic content in our catalogs and engage in the reparative work necessary to make our catalogs more inclusive and equitable" (189). To circumvent structural barriers and budgetary constraints, creative strategies were deployed. Librarians at the University of North Carolina at Charlotte tackled "smaller pilot projects focused on tightly defined metadata issues" to make significant gains, including LCSH and FAST remediation in Alma and Primo. Yuji Tosaka at the College of New Jersey identified the topical cutters .N3-5 for "Negroes" as a "small DEI project with a lasting impact" that could be "undertaken on top of existing workloads" when larger projects could not (198). Librarians committed to making change and, in cases where sweeping reform was not feasible, nevertheless pursued the scaled-back change that *was* possible.

Of the nineteen case study chapters, fifteen take place in research libraries. Three chapters focus on projects undertaken at relatively large and well-resourced public libraries. The research library chapters represent a more diverse array of settings within that category, including small individual libraries, research consortia, music libraries, and special collections. Audiences will take different lessons from the case studies depending on their own contexts. The approach taken at the Hayes Research Library at Perkins School for the Blind is necessarily different from that of Cornell University, but both are advancing the work of inclusive cataloging. Not all chapters will be directly applicable to all libraries, but almost any library will find something useful in these chapters. The range of projects and capacities described demonstrates that this work is indeed scalable and possible.

Perhaps the central message conveyed in the pages of *Inclusive Cataloging* is the necessity of iterative improvements to library catalogs in all places, at all times, not as an afterthought, but as a core activity of librarianship. At the close of chapter 2, "This is the Work," Fox and Gross powerfully assert that reparative cataloging "is not secondary or optional. This *is* the work" (24). *Inclusive Cataloging* serves as an all-in-one reference, toolkit, starting point, and inspiration for any cataloger or metadata librarian in search of that work.—*Elizabeth Taft (etaft@bu.edu), Boston University Libraries*