We Don’t Use those Words Anymore
Describing Yesterday’s News Today

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Please note

This presentation discusses collections with:

- Outdated language related to race
- Outdated language related to physical and intellectual ability
- Content related to rape and sexual assault
Overview

• WSLS-TV News Film Collection, 1951-1971
• Content reflective of its time
• Creating space for staff discussion
• Approaching description for problematic language
• Implications for describing future collections
WSLS-TV News Film Collection, 1951-1971

- News film and scripts from WSLS-TV, a television station in Roanoke, Virginia
- 13,000 clips and 11,000 corresponding anchor scripts
- Preserved and digitized through the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) “We the People” initiative
- Topics: politics, sports, social events, public health, civil rights demonstrations
Rev. James Brewer discusses referendum concerning Norfolk, Va., public schools and massive resistance

Digital Collection: WSLS-TV (Roanoke, VA) News Film Collection, 1951 to 1971
The WSLS-TV News Film Collection, 1951-1971, comprises anchor scripts and 16mm news created by Roanoke, Va., television station WSLS. A grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities funded the preservation and digitization of this collection.

Format: Video, Online, Anchor Script, Streaming Video

Release Date: 11/19/58

Run Time: 56 seconds

In Richmond today, Governor Almond commented on yesterday's referendum in Norfolk on the school issue. (start film)... He says it indicates even critical areas feel that mixing the races is no solution to the problem...

(show film)

In special balloting...the qualified voters of Norfolk went to the polls, expressing their sentiment on the State's "massive resistance" to school integration. The balloting actually represented only a straw vote, stating whether each voter wanted the City Council to petition Governor Almond to reopen public schools on an integrated basis. The schools have remained closed, under State law, rather than admit Negroes as ordered by Federal Court. Sentiment to reopen the schools has been rather high, among some Norfolk groups, primarily the "Norfolk Committee for Public Schools." The committee's president, Rev. James Brewer, expressed his views on the outcome of voting.

(((SOUND UP)))
WSLS-TV News Film Collection, 1951-1971

- Metadata design: title, date, topical/geographic subjects
- Create a title like a headline (e.g., “Firefighters put out blaze”)
- Problematic language quickly became apparent
WSLS-TV News Film Collection, 1951-1971

- Language reflective of its time: negro, crippled, retarded

Roanoke police are continuing to search for two negroes who reportedly mugged and robbed a North Carolian Soldier yesterday.

This year's harvest festival guest celebrity visited Crippled children today at the Roanoke Memorial Rehabilitation Center.

The New River Valley Home has been chosen as the name of the sheltered home for retarded children.
Creating space for staff discussion

- Communication
- Open space to express opinions about the language within the collection
- Range of diversity and experience among metadata staff
Approaching description for problem content

- Decision: do not include outdated language in titles
  - Re-work of previous description
  - New training and guidelines for catalogers
- Anchor scripts had full-text transcription
- Context critical: content and titles inside/outside the collection
Implications for describing future collections

- Take Back the Archive
- University of Virginia Printing Services photograph file
Take Back the Archive

- Established controlled vocabularies vs tagging
- “Rape victims” (LCSH) vs “survivor” (tag)
University of Virginia Printing Services photograph file

- Gender considerations
- “Man and boy walking” → “Adult and child walking”
Remediating legacy metadata

- Not a new and unique situation.
- Establishing a policy and mechanism for resolution
Looking forward

- Developmental opportunities for librarians
- Library-wide initiative in 2017: “the experience of others”
Concluding thoughts

• Importance of arrangement in metadata design and creation
• Communication with stakeholders
• An evolving process, not an event
Thank you

Questions or comments?

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