



# Inclusive Metadata

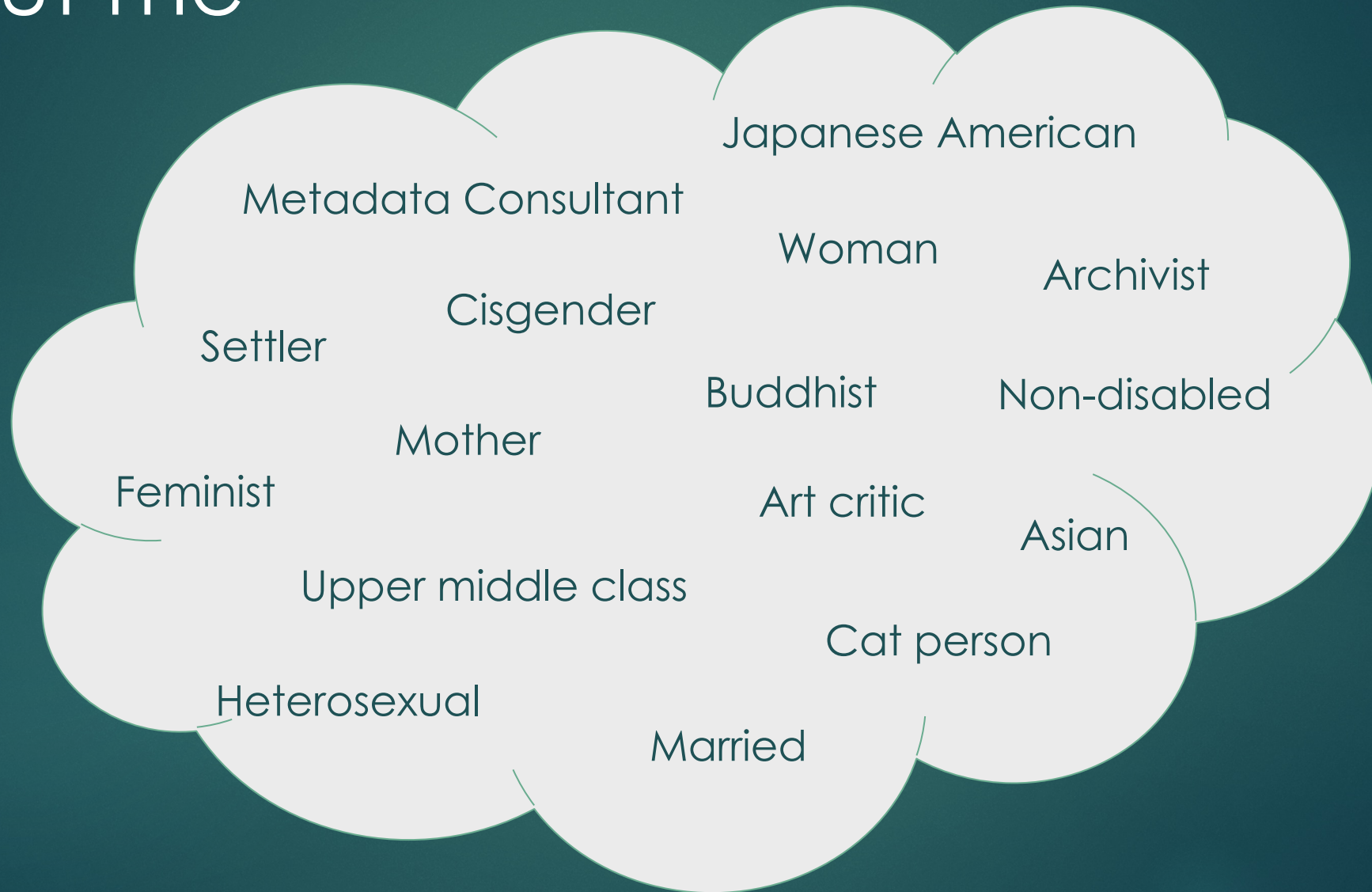
SHARON MIZOTA, INCLUSIVE METADATA CONSULTANT  
FOR SOUTHEASTERN NY LIBRARY RESOURCES COUNCIL  
JANUARY 24, 2024

# Land acknowledgement

I come to you today from the unceded territories of the Tongva and Chumash peoples. I acknowledge the devastation of colonial warfare and cultural genocide that separated these nations, and all Indigenous peoples in North America, from control of their homelands. I acknowledge that I have benefited from this separation. I honor and pay respect to these ancestors and communities, who continue to nurture life on this land, and support them in the resurgence of Indigenous rights and sovereignty.



# About me



# What we'll cover

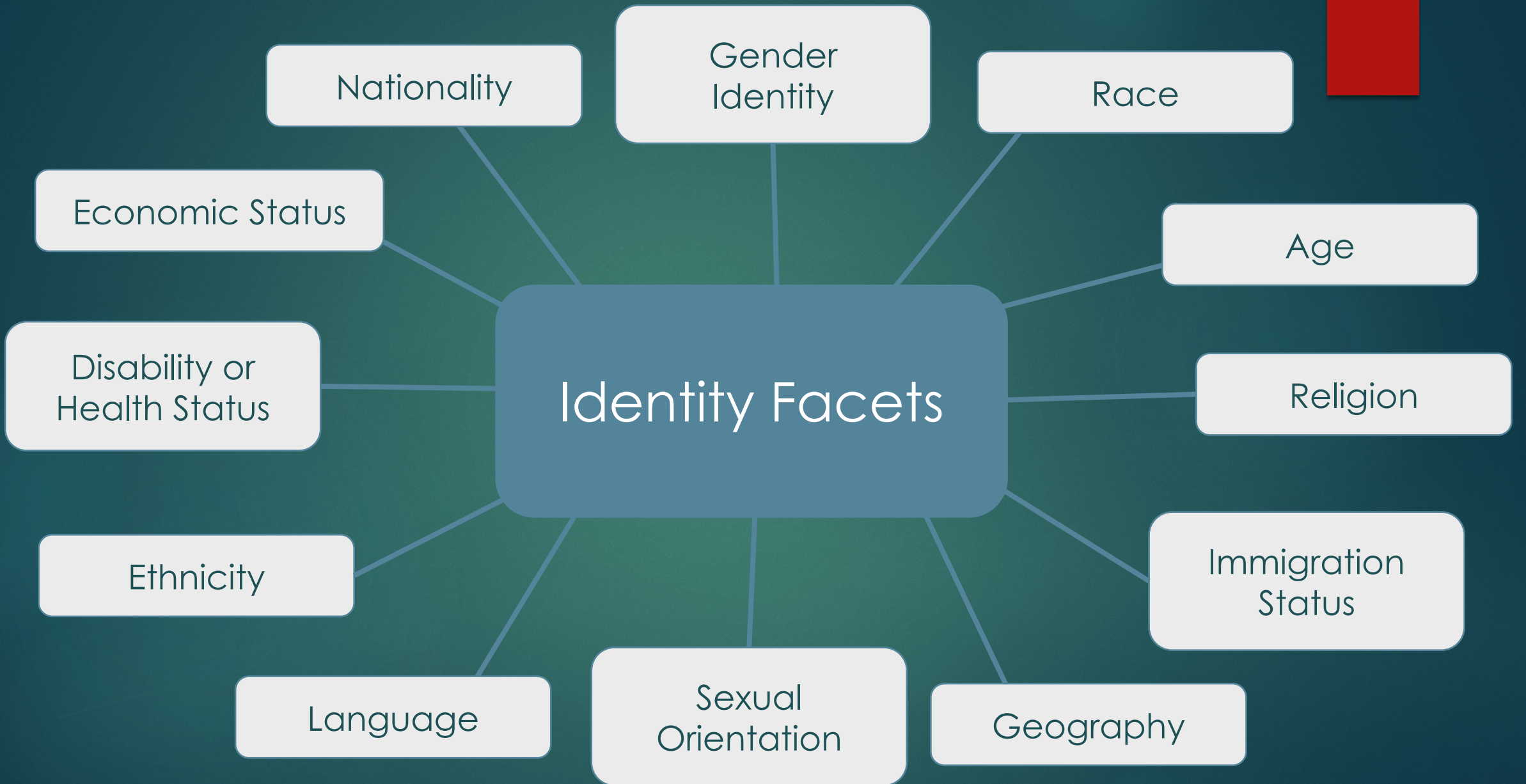
- ▶ What is inclusive metadata?
- ▶ Why is it important?
- ▶ Principles of inclusive metadata
- ▶ Auditing strategies
- ▶ Examples
- ▶ Questions & discussion



لا روسا, Wikimedia Diversity Conference 2017. [CC BY-SA 4.0](#),  
via Wikimedia Commons

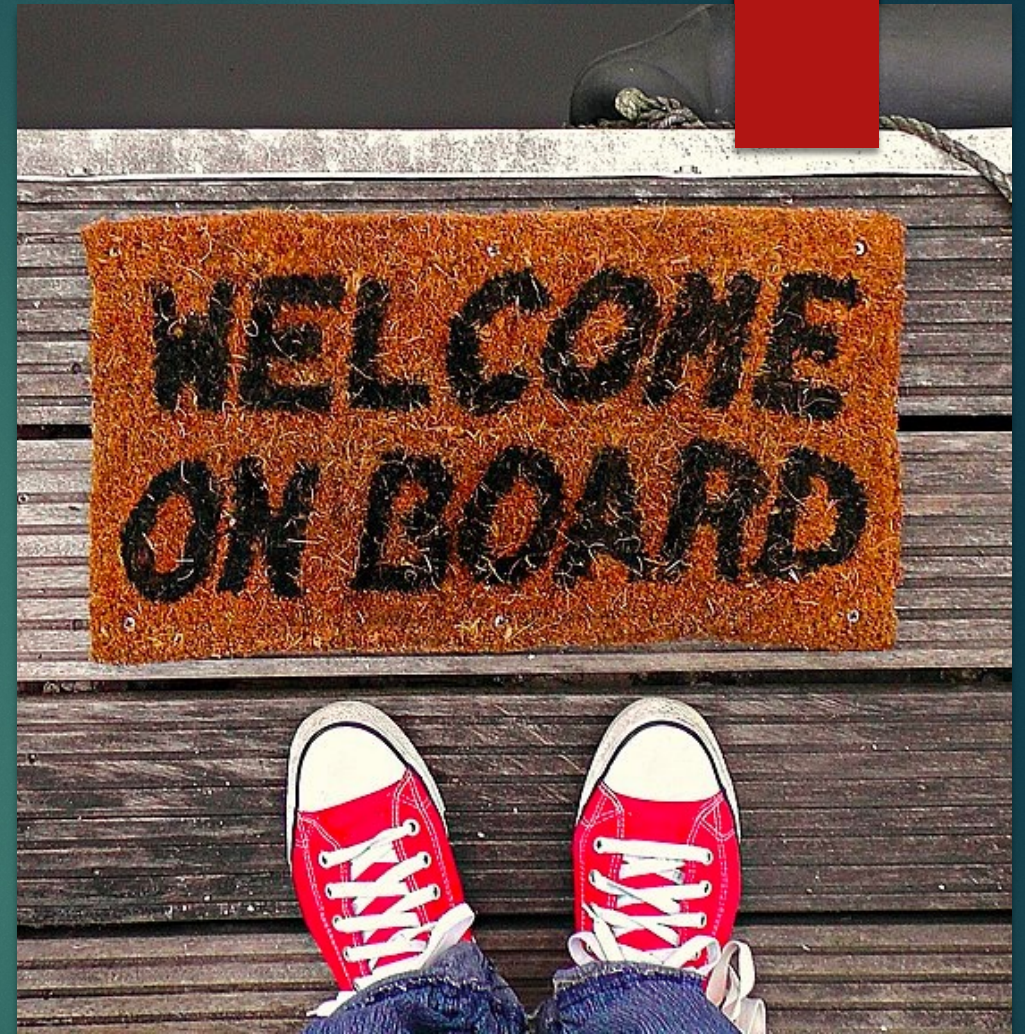
# What is inclusive metadata?

Inclusive metadata strives to represent people as they describe themselves. Often this metadata represents identity facets, such as race, gender, ability, culture, language, sexual orientation, etc.



# Inclusive metadata

- ▶ Acknowledges diversity
- ▶ Strives toward accurate and responsible representation for all
- ▶ Actively takes steps to mitigate or remove harm
- ▶ Is accessible:
  - Alt text
  - Image description
  - Simple sentences & vocabulary
  - Captioning
  - Sign language



Mabel Amber, CC0, via Wikimedia Commons

# Why is inclusive metadata important?

- ▶ Historical inequities
- ▶ Putting people first
- ▶ It's the right thing to do



University of Michigan School for Environment and Sustainability from Ann Arbor  
[CC BY 2.0](#), via Wikimedia Commons





# No one is neutral.

- ▶ A problem with library & information education is the myth of neutrality
- ▶ "Neutrality" has typically meant WEBCHAM\*
- ▶ No one is "neutral" or "default"



Checkingfax, [CC BY-SA 3.0](#), via Wikimedia Commons



# Principles of inclusive metadata

- ▶ People first
- ▶ Cultural humility
- ▶ Care for communities

# Putting people first

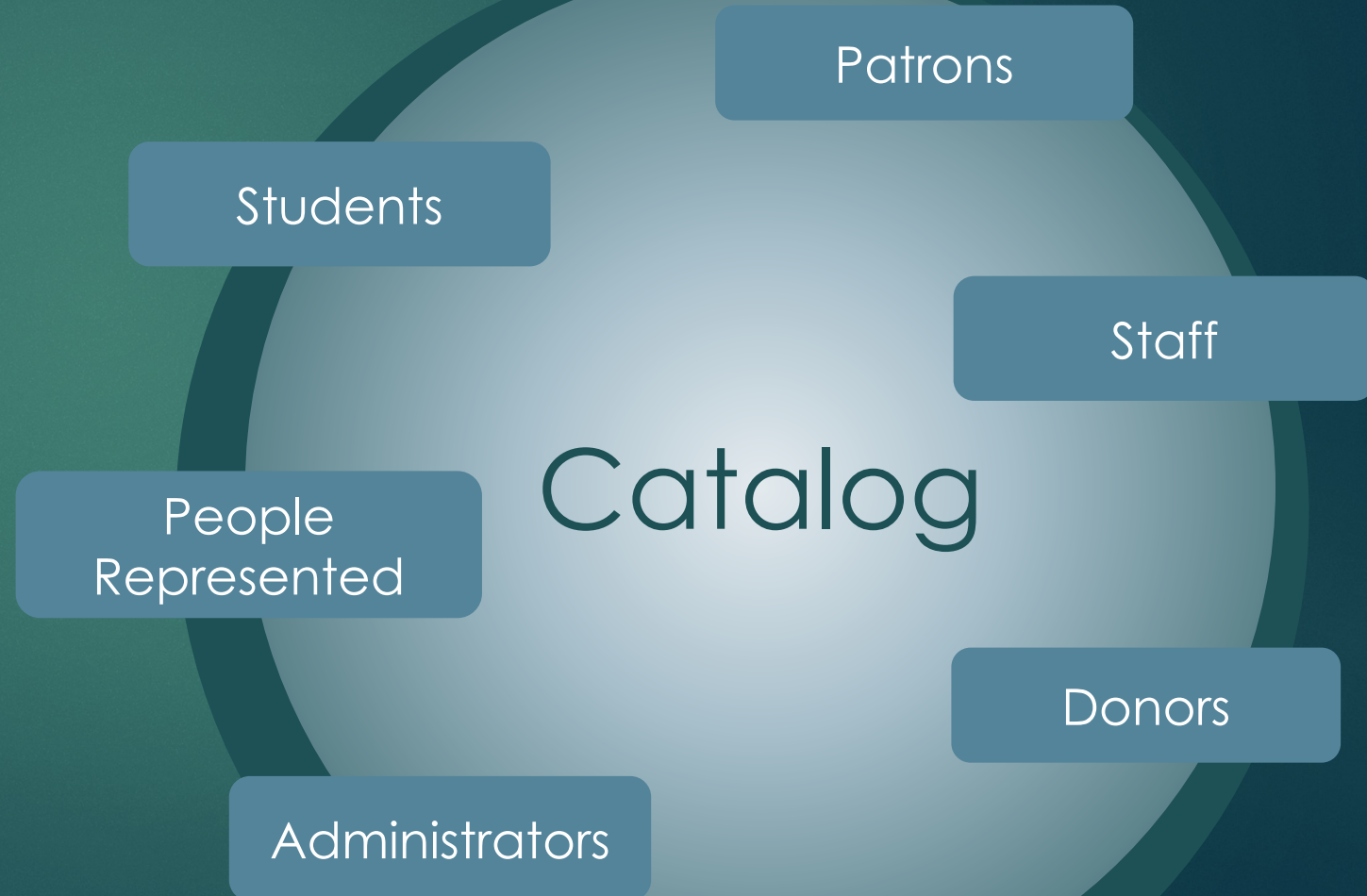
- Sometimes we focus too much on holdings and resources—the "stuff"
- Return to Ranganathan's laws:
  - Books/resources are for use **by people**.
  - Books/resources are for all **people**.
  - Every book/resource its reader/**people**.
  - Save the time of the reader/**people**.
  - A library/archives, etc. is a *growing organism*.
- Putting people first means moving from a resource focus to a people focus.

# Cultural humility

- Open to learning, making space for other voices
- Cultural competency vs. cultural humility
  - CC is a goal; do your research
- Life-long process of continual self-evaluation and reflection
- Being ok with not-knowing
- Apologize when you mess up

# A community of care

- Think of your catalog or DAMS as a community
- Inclusive metadata is a way of expressing care for our communities





# Auditing your metadata

- Identify areas for improvement
- Search, Sample, Repeat
- Do your research
- Consult communities
- Next steps

# Where to begin?

- ▶ Think about descriptive areas in your collections that involve people
  - ▶ Where are people depicted or represented?
  - ▶ What are the known issues?
  - ▶ What are the potential issues?
- ▶ Break it down into manageable parts; auditing metadata is often iterative







# Search, Sample, Repeat.

- **Search** catalogs and electronic finding aids to identify materials that may use harmful, offensive, or outdated language or terms.
- **Sample** materials to understand the issues and determine what areas or collections are most in need of redescription.
- **Repeat** this process as you learn more about your collections and the issues involved.

# Do your research: Educate yourself

Once you've identified areas for review, learn about the specific issues of representation involved

- Japanese American Citizens League's [The Power of Words](#)



## Power of Words Handbook

*A Guide to Language  
about Japanese Americans  
in World War II*

Understanding Euphemisms  
and Preferred Terminology

NATIONAL JAACL  
POWER OF WORDS II COMMITTEE  
APRIL 27, 2013 – Revised AUGUST 2020

# Do your research: Resource Examples



**National Center on Disability and Journalism**



About

Disability Language Style Guide ▾

Contest



A longer list is available at the end of this deck.



# Do your research: Consult the community represented

- Build authentic, trusting, *ongoing* relationships with communities—this may take time
  - Get identity information on the front end
  - Remember to practice cultural humility
  - Consider organizing focus groups or establishing an advisory board
- When possible, consultants should be compensated

# Do your research: What terms are preferred?

- Listen to how people identify themselves
- Consider the needs of users
- Emphasize & respect humanity

**“Black people”**

NOT “Blacks”

**“Died by suicide”**

NOT “Committed suicide”

**“Little person”**

NOT “Midget”

# Do your research: People-first vs. Identity-first language

**People-first** emphasizes the humanity of the subject:

- **person** with disabilities
- **people** experiencing homelessness

**Identity-first** emphasizes a specific identity:

- **Deaf** person
- **autistic** person

**Choice depends on the community**

Do your research:

What language should you avoid?

- Develop a lexicon of problematic language to look for
  - Problem LCSH, Cataloging Lab
  - Inclusive Terminology Project, Carissa Chew & National Library of Scotland
  - Wikipedia's lists of pejorative terms for people
- Don't forget alt text and image descriptions



# Next steps

- ▶ Harmful language statement
- ▶ Cataloging ethics statement
- ▶ Consider using alternative vocabularies or local terms





# Next steps: Harmful language statement

- Easy step to implement and support to show care
- Acknowledge harm; be specific about the types of content
- Acknowledge bias
- Acknowledge that inclusive metadata is a work in progress
- Provide an avenue for users to report harmful language or content

Examples: [Cataloging Lab](#)

# Next steps: Cataloging Ethics Statement

- Principles to guide your work
- [ALA's Cataloging Code of Ethics](#)

1. We catalogue resources in our collections with the end-user in mind to facilitate access and promote discovery.
2. We commit to describing resources without discrimination whilst respecting the privacy and preferences of their associated agents.
3. We acknowledge that we bring our biases to the workplace; therefore, we strive to overcome personal, institutional, and societal prejudices in our work.
4. We recognise that interoperability and consistent application of standards help our users find and access materials. However, all standards are biased; we will approach them critically and advocate to make cataloguing more inclusive.
5. We support efforts to make standards and tools financially, intellectually, and technologically accessible to all cataloguers, and developed with evidence-based research and stakeholder input.
6. We take responsibility for our cataloguing decisions and advocate for transparency in our institutional practices and policies.
7. We collaborate widely to support the creation, distribution, maintenance, and enrichment of metadata in various environments and jurisdictions.
8. We insist on diversity, equity, and inclusion in the workplace. We promote education, training, equitable pay, and a fair work environment for everyone who catalogues so that they can



# Next steps:

## Consider going local or open

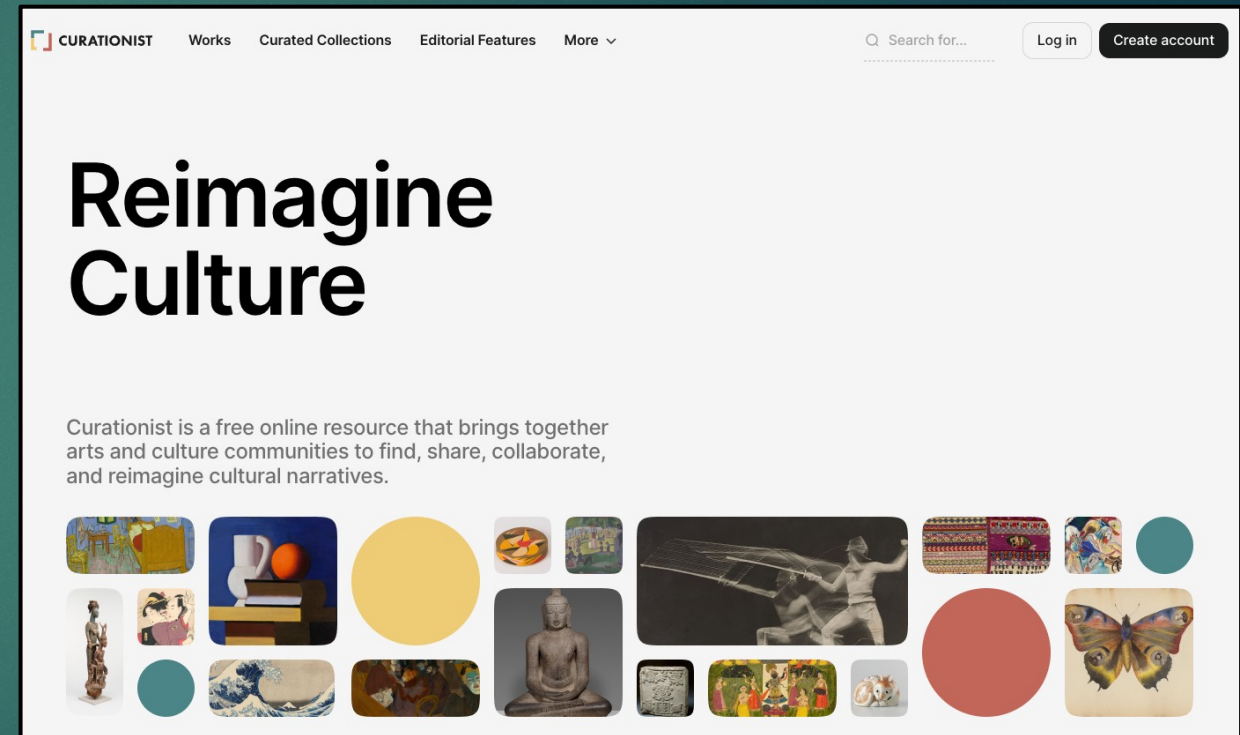
- Pros & cons of establishing and maintaining local vocabularies
  - How important is it for your collections?
  - How much time and staffing can you devote to maintaining it?
  - How often should it be reviewed?
- Linked Open Data is increasingly an option
  - [Homosaurus](#)
  - [Wikidata](#)

# Examples

- Curationist
- An encyclopedic art museum
- Arab Image Foundation

# Curationist

- ▶ Aggregator of open access, public domain or CC0 museum metadata and images
- ▶ Layer additional metadata on top of that coming from the source institution
  - ▶ Social justice orientation
- ▶ Commitment to open access sources:  
[Wikidata](#)
  - ▶ Developed [a guideline to using Wikidata as a controlled vocabulary](#)



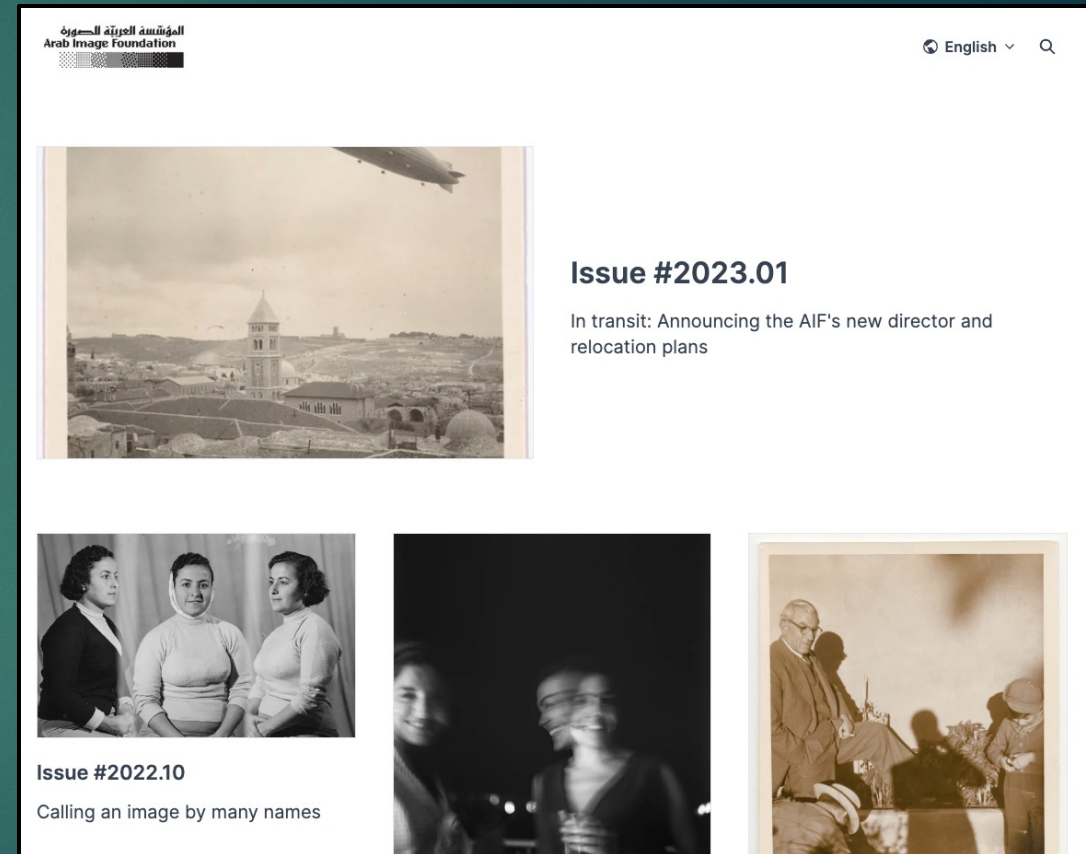
# An encyclopedic art museum

- ▶ Ethics Statement
- ▶ Cataloging Guide for Constituents
- ▶ Changing identities over time
  - ▶ Michelangelo
  - ▶ Trajan
- ▶ Use of multiple vocabulary sources
  - ▶ Library of Congress Demographic Terms
  - ▶ Getty Art & Architecture Thesaurus
  - ▶ Homosaurus
  - ▶ Wikidata



# Arab Image Foundation

- ▶ Association of photographers with a collection dating back to the origins of photography
  - ▶ Located in Beirut, Lebanon
  - ▶ Includes photography from throughout the region, not just by Arab photographers
  - ▶ Mostly "vernacular" photography
- ▶ Three-day workshop to design the structure for a custom controlled vocabulary
  - ▶ Different categories of description
  - ▶ Different ways of working together



The screenshot shows the website of the Arab Image Foundation. At the top left, the logo features the Arabic text 'المؤسسة العربية للصورة' and 'Arab Image Foundation' below it. In the top right corner, there is a language selector set to 'English' and a search icon. The main content area displays a large historical photograph of a cityscape with a prominent church tower and a biplane in the sky. To the right of this image is the text 'Issue #2023.01' and 'In transit: Announcing the AIF's new director and relocation plans'. Below this, there are three smaller thumbnail images: a black and white photo of three women, a dark photo of two smiling children, and a sepia-toned photo of a man sitting. The caption for the first thumbnail reads 'Issue #2022.10' and 'Calling an image by many names'.



# Questions & Discussion

Thank you!

Sharon Mizota

[www.sharonmizota.com](http://www.sharonmizota.com)

[sharon@sharonmizota.com](mailto:sharon@sharonmizota.com)



# Thesauri, Glossaries, & Style Guides

## General

[Conscious Style Guide](#)

[Diversity Style Guide](#)

[APA Style Guide](#), American Psychological Association

## Disabled People & Health Communities

[Glossary of Disability Terms](#), North Carolina Council on Developmental Disabilities

[Disability Language Style Guide](#), National Ctr. on Disability and Journalism

[Words Matter - Terms to Use and Avoid When Talking About Addiction](#), National Institute on Drug Abuse

## Gender & Sexual Orientation

[Gender, Sex, and Sexual Orientation \(GSSO\) ontology](#)

[GLAAD Media Reference Guide](#), Gay & Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation

[Homosaurus](#), Digital Transgender Archive

## Immigration

[Journalist Style Guide](#), Immigrant Defense Project

## Indigenous People & Communities

[AUSTRALANG](#), Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander vocabularies

[British Columbia First Nations Subject Headings](#), XWITXWA Library, First Nations House of Learning

[World Directory of Minorities and Indigenous Peoples](#), Minority Rights International

## Race & Ethnicity

[Racial Equity Tools Glossary](#)

[The Power of Words](#), Japanese American Citizens League

[Terminology](#), Densho (Japanese American digital archive)

[Cultural Competence Handbook](#), National Assn. of Hispanic Journalists

## Religious Communities

[The Pluralism Project](#) (Glossary of terms for religious groups), Harvard University

[Religion and Public Life Glossary of Terms](#), Harvard University

[The World's Muslims Glossary](#), Pew Research Center