Statement on Library District Collections

The catalog, web pages, and commercially licensed databases of the Poughkeepsie Public Library District provide access to both digital and physical content, including that of an historic and archival nature. Some of this content is not under the exclusive control of the Library District. For example, the Library District participates in a public catalog shared with other members of the Mid-Hudson Library System, and it leases some copyrighted and licensed content from third parties.

It is part of the Library District's charge to make such historic content accessible. This content contains images and text that spans the history of the United States as well as significant periods of world history.   As a result, some of the materials accessed may reflect violent or graphic events as well as outdated and offensive views and opinions.

The Library District is committed to working with staff, communities, and peer institutions to assess and update descriptions used to describe the content and to establish standards and policies related to staff-generated descriptions.

What content may be found in the catalog, web pages, and commercially licensed databases?

Some items may:
- reflect racist, sexist, ableist, misogynistic/misogynoir, and xenophobic opinions and attitudes;
- be discriminatory towards or exclude diverse views on sexuality, gender, religion, and more;
- include graphic content of historical events such as violent death, medical procedures, crime, wars/terrorist acts, natural disasters and more; or
- demonstrate bias and exclusion in institutional collection development.

Why does the Library District make this content available?

Part of the Library District's mission is to provide access to historic records and other published materials. Working in conjunction with diverse communities, the Library District will seek to balance the preservation of and access to the historical record with sensitivity to how these materials are presented to and perceived by users.

How is staff working to help users better understand such content?

Examples include:

- informing users about the presence and origin of objectionable content;

- revising descriptions and standardized sets of descriptive terms, supplementing description with more appropriate terms, or creating new standardized terms to describe materials;
- researching the problem, listening to users, experimenting with solutions, and sharing our findings with each other;
- evaluating existing processes for exclusionary practices or institutional bias that prioritize one culture and/or group over another;
- making an institutional commitment to diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility.

How do I report outdated language in archival descriptions in the Catalog?

Please note: this process applies only to language found within descriptions of the records, not to the content of the material. The Library District does not alter the content of original material.

You can help us by reporting outdated language that you see in descriptions in the Library District's catalog, web pages, and commercially licensed databases.

Email us at administration@poklib.org and include:

- the content and the descriptive language
- a quote of the specific language you feel is harmful
- a suggested alternative if you have one

The Library District will review the report considering input from affected communities, accurate preservation of the historical record, professional best practices, and allocation of staff resources.

The Statement on Library District Collections will be reviewed at least annually to ensure continued relevance.

Approved: August 31, 2022