



Assessment Annual Report

Service: Development of the [SCARC Anti-Racist Actions Statement](#), Special Collections and Archives Research Center (SCARC)

Fiscal Year: FY21 (2020-2021 academic year)

Overview

For years, but especially the past few years, the archival profession has engaged in conversations regarding anti-racist description of collections, both in terms of the way collection creators have described collections as well as how archivists have described collections. The group [Archives for Black Lives \(A4BLiP\)](#), a loose association of archivists, librarians, and allied professionals responding to the issues raised by the Black Lives Matter movement, created the resource [Archives for Black Lives in Philadelphia: Anti-Racist Description Resources](#) in 2019 and updated it in 2020. In the summer of 2020, the Society of American Archivists published the [SAA Council Statement on Black Lives and Archives](#), and the PNW's regional organization, Northwest Archivists, published the [Northwest Archivists Statement on Anti-racism](#). Most recently, in the summer of 2021, the Orbis Cascade Alliance Unique Materials in the SILS Standing Group published the resource [Guidelines for Addressing Bias in Archival Description and Catalog Records](#). Across the country, numerous special collections repositories have published statements on harmful or offensive language in description and bias in cataloging: [List of statements on bias in library and archives description](#).

As part of the SCARC FY21 work plan, we determined that anti-racist work was going to be one of our areas of focus for the year that would include all SCARCers. Our three action items were 1) seek out and engage in anti-racist educational materials and trainings, 2) engage in department wide, as well as team based, conversations regarding the implementation of anti-racist work into our policies and practices, and 3) develop and implement concrete action items regarding anti-racist work.

As a first step, numerous SCARC staff attended the August 2020 Society of American Archivists conference which included sessions addressing anti-racist description in archival collections. In mid-September, the SCARC Arrangement and Description (A/D) Team engaged in a discussion about how to translate anti-racist actions from theory into action within the context of archival description practices. SCARC then engaged in a department-wide conversation to connect the A/D specific work to a higher level anti-racist actions commitment made by the entire department. We decided that we did not want to make a statement without identifying concrete actions, but we also did not want to engage in those actions without having a shared context for them, both for our library colleagues as well as for the public. Additionally, we wanted to come to internal consensus among the whole department for both the planned actions and public statement.

Over the course of the year, we engaged in A/D Team meetings to plan for and move forward with concrete action items, charged a small group to research and draft a statement, and held department-level conversations to offer feedback on the actions and statement. In May 2021 SCARC published a LibGuide as a public access point for the statement and to document our actions; we added a link to the guide on the SCARC homepage and mission statement page. The Interim AUL shared information about the [SCARC Anti-Racist Actions Statement](#) via email to all library faculty and staff, and the SCARC Interim Director shared information about the development of the statement with the Library Administration, Management, and Planning (LAMP) group.

Strategic Significance:

The OSULP Strategic Plan states that “Our work is rooted in our commitment to openness, inclusion, equity and diversity.” The development of a SCARC Anti-Racist Actions Statement supports strategic Goal #4, Practice Active and Respectful Stewardship, which is partially defined as engaging in “respectful, ethical, and active stewardship rooted in listening, in deepening and honoring relationships, and in responding proactively from the foundation of our mission, vision, values, experience and expertise.” SCARC’s work was also a response to the [June 2020 OSULP Call to Action](#), and the September 2020 message from the OSU President titled “OSU takes next steps to address racism, advance equality.” Additionally, SCARC’s work over this past year is in line with the May 2021 DeEtta Jones & Associates Recommendations for OSULP, specifically the recommendations to translate EDI learning into action, create a shared vision statement on defining anti-racism, and develop an EDIAR (Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, and Anti-Racism) commitment statement showing OSULP’s internal and public commitment to diversity, equity, inclusion, and anti-racism.

Takeaways:

- SCARC committed to do our anti-racism work carefully, intentionally, and sustainably with the understanding that the work would be on-going and never fully completed. To that end, we included an Actions Underway section in the [SCARC Anti-Racist Actions Statement](#). Knowing that our values are reflected in how we spend our resources, we devoted substantial time, creativity, and attention to this work.
- In addition to the department-wide focus on anti-racism work for FY21, the A/D (Arrangement and Description) Team developed the following specific goals for FY21 in summer 2020: learn about anti-racist description; evaluate our current descriptive practice through the lens of anti-racism; develop practices and procedures for anti-racist description to implement for future finding aids and to address racist description in legacy finding aids. Everyone in the department participates in or is impacted by our work to process, describe, and make available our collections for discovery. The parallel work at the department-level on a SCARC anti-racist actions statement and by the A/D Team on specific actions placed this work squarely in our day-to-day activities and offered opportunities for engagement at a high-level with theory and principles as well as with details of individual collections.
- As part of our standard practice for new digital objects, especially in Oregon Digital, we are being intentional about using anti-racist terminology to describe the content being presented. This process includes describing content related to race, sexuality and gender, and immigration status, for example, using inclusive terminology that communities have adopted to describe themselves. We are also remediating legacy descriptions for digital objects that do not conform to the best practices being

deployed for the creation of new digital objects. This activity will be a major point of emphasis for our digital collections work going forward.

- SCARC finding aids and content available online is public facing. The work of the A/D Team, as well as the being intentional about using anti-racist terminology to describe the content being presented in digital objects, has positively impacted the work of SCARC's Public Services Team.
- We celebrated small steps on our journey through this work because each step moved us forward. These small steps included determining where an anti-racist acknowledgement would be placed in our collection guides; working with ETS to modify Archon so that the element displays in the public interface; and notifying the Alliance that the Archives West compliance checker did not allow for the codes indicating a finding aid is written in multiple languages.
- We used the tools that we are familiar with and that work best for us and our users. Specifically, we selected a LibGuide as the means for communicating our anti-racist action statement to our users, colleagues, and the public.
- Anti-racist description in SCARC has multiple interwoven strands which require different long-term approaches to address them. Some collections include problematic content; harmful language has been used by collection creators, archivists, and librarians to describe collections; and standardized vocabularies which allow for enhanced discovery across platforms and materials types often include outdated and objectionable terms. Some of these issues are specific to one collection, while others pertain to multiple collections. These issues are complicated and require actions at multiple levels -- locally, regionally, and nationally -- as well as interventions to include anti-racist acknowledgements in new collection descriptions as they are prepared now and addressing harmful issues in existing legacy descriptions.
- Fortuitously, as we were completing the [SCARC Anti-Racist Actions Statement](#) a finding was being written for a collection that included harmful donor-supplied description. We were able to immediately apply the planning we had done, refine the format for an anti-racist acknowledgement in the finding aid, and include a link to the SCARC Anti-Racist Actions Statement in the finding aid for the [George A. Sense Photographs \(P 249\)](#).

Next Steps:

Because engaging in anti-racist work is an ongoing journey, our FY21 action items are all applicable in FY22: 1) seek out and engage in anti-racist educational materials and trainings, 2) engage in department wide, as well as team based, conversations regarding the implementation of anti-racist work into our policies and practices, and 3) develop and implement concrete action items regarding anti-racist work.

SCARCers will continue on our collective and individual journeys -- through shared and individual learning; conversations as a department, in teams, and one-on-one; and implementation of concrete actions. We commit to engaging in this journey with care and continued self-reflection and will continue to document and share with our users and professional colleagues. We will be mindful of our capacity to accomplish our next steps with the knowledge that anti-racist work takes a great deal of emotional and intellectual work, along with the time involved in the implementation of the tasks we develop for ourselves.

As a department and in team meetings, we will revisit our next steps throughout the year to assess our progress and adjust timelines and tasks accordingly.

Below are specific tasks in support of our department wide action items.

1) Seek out and engage in anti-racist educational materials and trainings, to include:

- Participating in the summer 2021 "Essentials of Cultural Competence" training; reflect and discuss as a department.
- Attending sessions related to anti-racist work at the August 2021 Society of American Archivists virtual conference; reflect and discuss as a department.

2) Engage in department wide, as well as team based, conversations regarding the implementation of anti-racist work into our policies and practices, including:

- Exploring and discussing the expansion of anti-racist actions to other functional areas, such as reference, instruction, and collection development, making sure we are intentional and remain aware of our capacity as a department and individually.
- Reviewing the 2021 Guidelines for Addressing Bias in Archival Description and Catalog Records released by the Orbis Cascade Alliance in June 2021 and, based on that review by the A/D Team, incorporate appropriate recommendations as new practices for SCARC finding aids or modify existing descriptive practices.
- Continuing to apply anti-racist acknowledgement statements in finding aids; developing a statement to be included in finding aids that refer to the annual athletic rivalry between Oregon State University and the University of Oregon; expanding and analyzing the list of problematic terms; and exploring and investigating alternative standard vocabularies.
- Continuing to be intentional about using anti-racist terminology in our digital collections work to describe the content being presented and continuing to remediate legacy descriptions for digital objects that do not conform to the best practices being deployed for the creation of new digital objects. There are plans in place for adding an anti-racist statement to Oregon Digital 2.

3) Develop and implement concrete action items regarding anti-racist work, including:

- Updating the LibGuide, especially the "Actions Underway" page.
- Ensuring that anti-racism work is front and center in the role of the future SCARC permanent director.
- Including EDI goals in FY22 goals for SCARC faculty and staff. Position descriptions will be reviewed to make sure that all include anti-racist actions and EDI work as part of the duties as is relevant to each position.
- Brainstorming quantitative methods to assess our work; for example, the number of archival collection finding aids that include a Statement on Description, the number of terms and subject headings changed, views on the LibGuide, and responses from the profession, etc.

Assessment:

The assessment methods for our anti-racist work consisted of discussion and self-reflection, the review of professional guidelines, resources, and the work of other institutions, and the completion of specific tasks in relation to our action items. Throughout the year, SCARCers engaged in a number of discussions regarding the resources we reviewed as we brainstormed how to translate theory into practice specific to our work as archivists. A key

part of this process was to be open with each other in our conversations and to recognize - and remind ourselves - that this is ongoing work that needs to be done thoughtfully and carefully, and the work takes time. Although we recognize that anti-racist work is about our journey of personal and professional growth, not just a final product, we do still acknowledge the importance of tangible "products" related to this work. Significant tasks completed this year include the addition of the "Statement on Description" in Archon and the publication of the SCARC Anti-Racist Actions Statement. From the start of this department wide process to engage in anti-racist work, we recognized the importance of documenting our work, for transparency and for posterity, and will continue to document our work as we move forward in FY22.

Respectfully submitted,

July 30, 2021

OSU Libraries Special Collections and Archives Research Center

Natalia Fernández, Interim Director of SCARC; Curator of the Oregon Multicultural Archives and OSU Queer Archives

Elizabeth Nielsen, University Archivist; Records Center Manager

Anne Bahde, History of Science Collections Librarian; Rare Books Librarian

Brian Davis, Supervisor, Digital Production Unit

Anna Dvorak, Public Services Assistant

Tiah Edmunson-Morton, Curator of the Oregon Hops and Brewing Archives; Outreach and Instruction Archivist

Kevin Jones, Metadata Technician, Digital Production Unit

Rachel Lilley, Public Services Archivist

Karl McCreary, Collections Archivist

Chris Petersen, Senior Faculty Research Assistant

Ryan Wick, Analyst Programmer