Survey of Libraries' Local Changes to "Illegal aliens" LCSH

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Background

June 2019	Sept-Oct 2019	June 2020	July 2021
ALA ALCTS Subject Analysis Committee	**Survey Distributed**	**Survey Results Released**	**LRTS Article**
Forms the SAC Working Group on Alternatives to LCSH "Illegal aliens".	The SAC Working Group distributes survey to the library community.	SAC Working Group release report on the results of the survey.	Several members from the SAC Working Group write an article that is published in LRTS detailing the survey and its results.

Survey Questions

What changes has your library / library system / consortium made to this subject heading?

Were the changes one-time, or are new records with the subject headings accounted for in your approach? If you made one-time changes, do you plan to address new records with the "Illegal aliens" LCSH?

Who performed the changes?

Did you have to make changes in your discovery interface in order to include the changes you made to the subject heading? If so, what actions did you take?

Approximately how long did the changes take to implement?

What challenges did you encounter with making these changes?

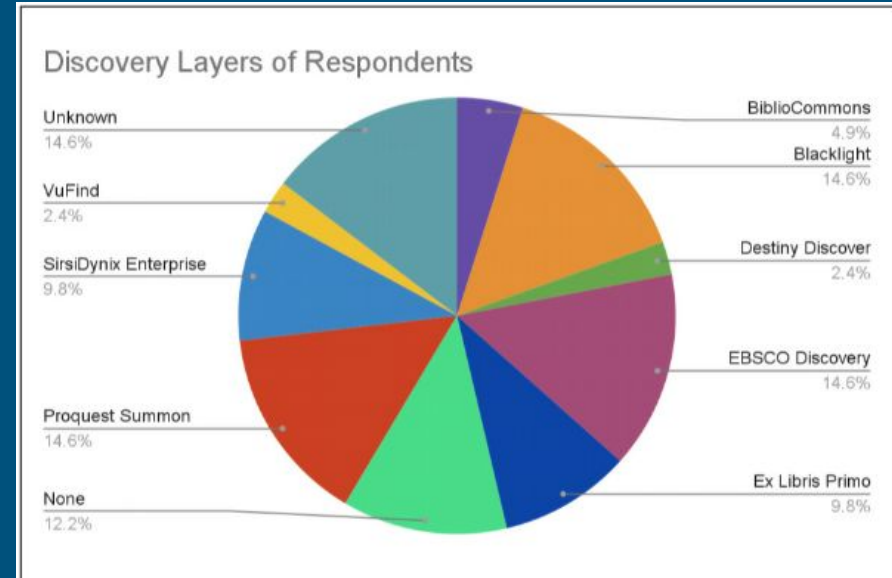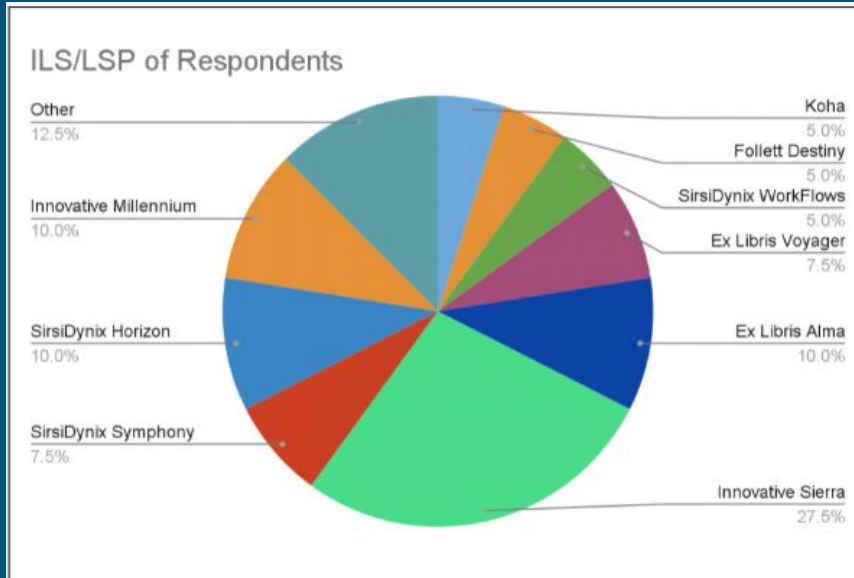What would you do differently if given the chance to make these changes again?

Were library / organizational administration or other parts of the library involved in the decision to make these changes?

Were these changes communicated to the organization or the public, and if so, how?

Have you received any response to the changes? If so, was it positive or negative?
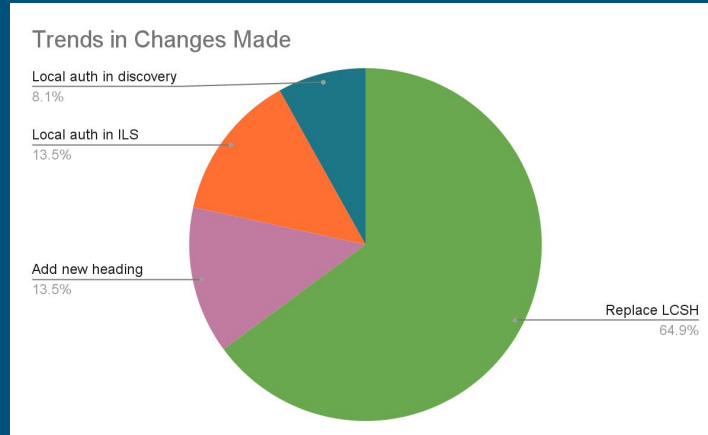
Survey Results

40 responses | 64% academic libraries | Wide variety of ILSs and Discovery layers

ILS/LSP of Respondents

- Other 12.5%
- Innovative Millennium 10.0%
- SirsiDynix Horizon 10.0%
- SirsiDynix Symphony 7.5%
- Koha 5.0%
- Follett Destiny 5.0%
- SirsiDynix WorkFlows 5.0%
- Ex Libris Voyager 7.5%
- Ex Libris Alma 10.0%
- Innovative Sierra 27.5%

Discovery Layers of Respondents

- Unknown 14.6%
- VuFind 2.4%
- SirsiDynix Enterprise 9.8%
- Proquest Summon 14.6%
- None 12.2%
- BiblioCommons 4.9%
- Blacklight 14.6%
- Destiny Discover 2.4%
- EBSCO Discovery 14.6%
- Ex Libris Primo 9.8%

Trends in Changes Made

- Replace "Illegal aliens" LCSH (64.9%)
- Add new heading without removing "Illegal aliens" LCSH (13.5%)
- Create local authority record in ILS/LMS (13.5%)
- Create local authority record in discovery system (8.1%)
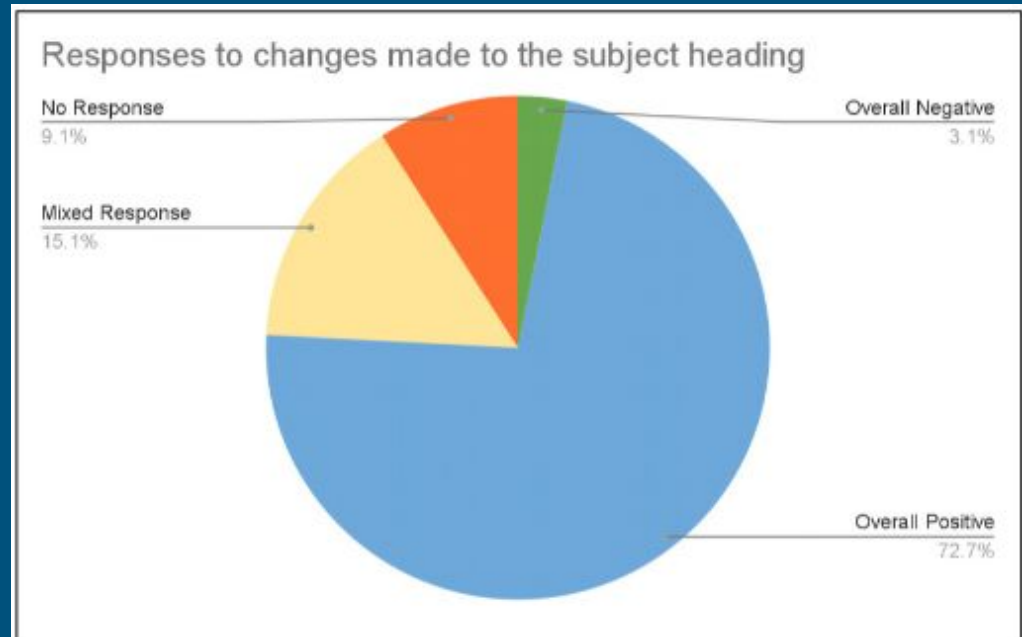

Trends in Changes Made

Local auth in discovery
8.1%

Local auth in ILS
13.5%

Add new heading
13.5%

Replace LCSH
64.9%

Trends in Changes Made

- SAC Working Group [2016 proposed LCSH revisions](#)
- Majority of libraries opted to use "Undocumented immigrants" for LCSH "Illegal aliens"
- Some institutions also added local heading "Noncitizens" for LCSH "Aliens"
- No standardized replacement for LCSH "Alien detention centers"; changes included:
  - "Undocumented immigrant centers"
  - "Immigrant detention centers"
  - "Detention centres for undocumented immigrants"
  - "Noncitizen detention centers"

Challenges Encountered

- Deciding how to make changes on a consortium-wide basis
- Deciding which alternative vocabulary/terminology to use
- Unanticipated bibliographic maintenance
  - Confusion regarding terms such as "aliens" versus "extraterrestrials"
- Database syncing issues causing delayed displaying of revisions
- Inconsistencies
  - Forgetting to revise headings that are not alphabetically near "Illegal aliens" (e.g., "Children of illegal aliens")
- Keeping up with revising headings in new bibliographic records
- Workload/staffing issues
- Working around automated authority control systems

Community Responses to Changes

- Overall positive (72.7%)
- Mixed response (15.1%)
- No response (9.1%)
- Overall negative (3.1%)

Responses to changes made to the subject heading

No Response
9.1%

Overall Negative
3.1%

Mixed Response
15.1%

Overall Positive
72.7%

Community Responses to Changes

Specific mixed/negative responses to libraries making changes

- National conservative student newspaper questioned project; library gave brief, factual response
- Conservative news site questioned project; library responded with info from initial proposal
- "Some catalogers were less enthusiastic"
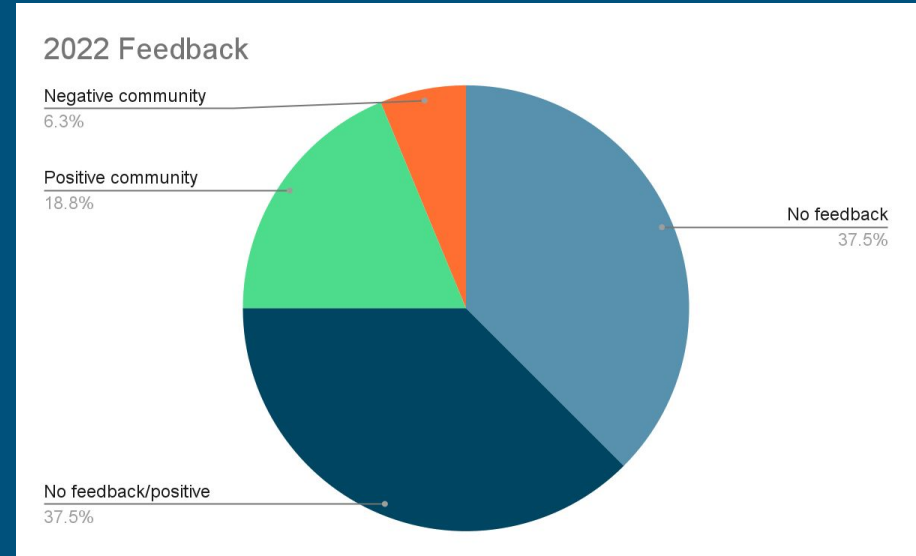- Consortium-wide changes made without prior institutional permission

"What would you do differently if given the chance to make these changes again?"

- Most frequent response: **"Nothing"**
- 2nd most frequent response: **"Make the changes sooner"**
- Other: automate the changes, use a different method, address ongoing maintenance
- Comments: "I think it has worked great. We'll consider this for other offensive headings", "I just wish everyone else were doing this"

Community Responses to Changes

May 2022 - follow up question on further feedback to original survey respondents

- 16 out of 42 respondents
- No feedback 37.5%
- No community feedback/positive staff feedback 37.5%
- Positive community feedback 18.8%
- Negative feedback 6.3%
  - Only 1 institution
  - "Sarcastic" alumni letter not seeking a response

2022 Feedback

Negative community
6.3%

Positive community
18.8%

No feedback
37.5%

No feedback/positive
37.5%

Recent LC Changes to "Illegal aliens"

March 2016	Nov 2021	Reaction to LC Changes
LC Policy and Standards Division announcement replacing "Illegal aliens" with **"Noncitizens"** *and* **"Unauthorized immigration"**	LC Policy and Standards Division announcement replacing "Illegal aliens" with **"Noncitizens"** *and* **"Illegal immigration"**	- Nov-Dec 2021: "It Changed. Now What?," small group discussions hosted by Jill Baron, report forthcoming - Some (including ALA) wrote statements supporting LC's change, while some argued keeping the term *Illegal* is not enough - Organizations (like Race Forward) and individual librarians have advocated for LC to **#DropTheIWord** from subject headings referring to undocumented immigrants - June 2022: PCC "encourages its member institutions to explore avenues for reducing reliance on a single controlled vocabulary controlled by LC" "The political pressures faced by LC are significant, leading to choices which may not reflect the most appropriate terminology for many libraries in the U.S. and beyond."

References/Further Reading

[Library of Congress to Cancel the Subject Heading "Illegal Aliens"](3/22/2016)

[Report from the SAC Working Group on the LCSH "Illegal aliens"](7/13/16)

[Report of the SAC Working Group on Alternatives to LCSH "Illegal aliens"](6/19/20)

[A Path for Moving Forward with Local Changes to the Library of Congress Subject Heading "Illegal Aliens"] (LRTS 65.3) [[IR pre-print]]

[Guidelines for Addressing Bias in Archival Description and Catalog Records] (2021, Orbis Cascade Alliance [Unique Materials in the SILS Standing Group])

Questions?

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