Potentially Harmful Language and Content Warnings

Digital Commonwealth, June 14, 2022

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Tufts University Digital Collections and Archives

- 8 FTE
- Reports to Provost’s office
- ~100,000 objects in Digital Library
- ~11,000 linear feet of collections

Background

- Upcoming accessions, Fall 2018
- Yearbook blackface controversy, February 2019
- Literature review, Summer 2019
- Statement on potentially harmful language in archival description, Winter 2019
- Content warnings for digital archival material, Winter 2019
- Harmful description survey, Fall 2020
SUBJECT HEADINGS AND OTHER DESCRIPTION

AUTOMATED AND MANUAL REMEDIATION
- Modified scripts created by others to review existing description for anti-Black racism, anti-Semitism, and aggrandizing language

- Exported csv results for manual review, tinkered to remove false positives, reviewed again

- Some automatable replacements but most required human intervention
Tufts graduate poses with his family

Grant, Spencer
1977

Subject
- Black people
- Alumni and alumnae
Poster Offering 300 Dollar Reward for a Fugitive from Slavery

Scope and Contents
This collection includes one poster from 1856 offering a 300-dollar reward for a fugitive from slavery named Tom, from New Orleans, Louisiana.

Dates
1856

Conditions Governing Access
This collection is open for research.

Conditions Governing Use
Some material in this collection may be protected by copyright and other rights. Please see "Reproduction and Use" to publish. No documentation is available regarding the intellectual property rights in this collection.

Extent
1.42 Linear Feet (1 oversized folder)

Language of Materials
English

Subjects
- African American history
- Enslaved persons
OFFENSIVE IMAGERY AND CONTENT WARNINGS
DACS 3.1 : Scope and Content (required)

This element provides information about the nature of the materials and activities reflected in the unit being described to enable users to judge its potential relevance.
Content Warning
This collection contains materials created by conservative groups across the United States, and research materials about these groups. These materials deal with topics including right-wing extremism, anti-Semitism, anti-abortion violence, nativism, racism, traditional family values, anti-LGBT issues, the Klu Klux Klan, the Nazi Party, women’s rights, social justice, and human rights monitoring. Materials in this collection contain images and rhetoric that is anti-Semitic, racist, homophobic, and misogynist, as well as images that are graphic in nature.

Scope and Contents
The collection consists of materials created and collected by the Political Research Associates. The records are arranged into three series: 1. Publications, 2. Chip Berlet Research Files, and 3. Subject Files. The first series consists of publications created by political, social, and religious organizations as well as hate groups and watchdog organizations, largely in the United States. The materials are largely professional publications. See more>

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This finding aid contains language that may be offensive or outdated. Because such language is in direct transcription of existing older titles or of published materials, it has not been changed. Keeping this language intact provides the most accurate depiction of the creators’ intent, and can potentially tell us important things about bigotry and bias on the part of the creators, or in a particular historical context. It can also preserve terms formerly applied by a group to self-identify that have since fallen out of common usage.

For more information on DCA’s content warning policy please visit our website. See less
Content Warning

Materials in this folder contain racist and white supremacist language. For more information on DCA's content warning policy please visit our website.
Content Warning

This scrapbook contains a poem describing potential sexual violence in a supposedly humorous tone. For more information on DCA’s content warning policy please visit our website: https://dca.tufts.edu/content-warnings-protocol-for-digital-archival-material
This issue of the Tufts Daily contains an article which includes quotes with specific, uncensored slurs about gay men and Black people. The article, about vandalism of Carmichael Hall, is on the front page of the issue and the slurs are quoted in the first paragraph of the article. Learn more about Digital Collections & Archives content warning policy on our website: https://dca.tufts.edu/content-

This object is in collection

Tufts Daily

Temporal

1996

Permanent URL

http://hdl.handle.net/10427/10266
HISTORICAL LANGUAGE
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LANGUAGE REMEDIATION
In April 2021 this finding aid was reviewed for offensive description by Collections Management Archivist Adrienne Pruitt. Terms pertaining to slavery were updated according to P. Gabrielle Foreman, et al. “Writing about Slavery/Teaching About Slavery: This Might Help” community-sourced document, accessed December 15, 2020. The word “Black” was capitalized when used to refer to an identity or race.
CONCLUSION
Continuing Remediation, Integrating Practices, and Lessons Learned
ONGOING WORK

REVIEW
Implement peer and community review.

COMMUNITY
Work with Tufts community constituents to discuss our decisions.

GUIDELINES
Comprehensive guidelines for the creation of respectful documentation.

STANDARDS
Work with our colleagues in the library system to support changes to offensive authorized terminology.

CLOSED MATERIALS
Review Dark Archive materials for content issues.

STAY INFORMED
Continue to read current literature and keep up with projects in other repositories.
Integrating into Current Practices

- Applying content warnings as part of processing and description
- Assessing for description and content warning needs at digitization
- Responding to user feedback
Assessing whether a content warning is needed:

Content warnings should be given for items that contain content – written, graphical, or spoken – that is offensive or hateful including but not limited to language that is racist, misogynistic, queer- or transphobic or misc, slurs, hate speech against a marginalized group, or speech advocating violence. Additional warnings may be warranted for items which document traumatic experiences or language about traumatic experiences which users may also find traumatic (i.e. graphic descriptions of injury or violence, medical trauma, eating disorders, domestic violence, child abuse, etc.). Staff should use their best judgement when discerning what content should be warned for. In cases of uncertainty, staff may choose to speak with colleagues about appropriate warnings.

Crafting content warning statements:

Content warning statements should be:
- Specific with regards to what the warning is for ("blackface" instead of "racism", "slurs about gay men" instead of "hate speech")
- Specificity does not necessarily mean exhaustive – especially in the case of boxes or folders of material described at the aggregate level, or AV material, where there may be too much content to make an exhaustive list practical, or in cases where it is not practical to watch, listen, or read the entire item. In such cases notes should strive to be as specific as necessary to convey the scope of the item, but staff should not endeavor to create an exhaustive note.
LESSONS LEARNED

- Don’t reinvent the wheel
- Use pre-existing practices
- Build achievable workflows
- Be aware of your context
- Talk about it!
Any questions?

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