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# Unforeseen Consequences of Visual Literacy: Alternative Mechanisms for Creating a More Inclusive Environment

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CHAPTER 12

# Unforeseen Consequences of Visual Literacy

## Alternative Mechanisms for Creating a More Inclusive Environment

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*The authors acknowledge that the language and experiences of disability are diverse. While the authors worked to utilize inclusive language throughout the chapter, it is also important to note that every person living these experiences will have their own preferences. Two of the authors are in the disabled/chronic illness community and ask that you respect their perspective, as well.*

## Introduction

Academic ableism pervades libraries, running rampant in every aspect of the profession. The authors do not intend to prove this fact, as many have already done this work before.[1] Overwhelmingly entrenched ableism within our profession has led to issues in many facets of our work, including with the language we use (or choose not to use) when creating policies and guidelines. While as a profession we aim to create these documents to help usher in consistency and standards for those in our field, in many ways we end up centering a homogenous narrative that doesn't critically evaluate the language being utilized to build supposed cohesion.

We know that "According to Disabled World (n.d.), those who have disabilities make up the nation's largest minority group. Yet for whatever reason, people with disabilities are startlingly left out of the conversation around diversity."[2] Thus, the ways in which we write our standards need to incorporate these truths and seek out the voices of those who might be able to expand our views of what visual literacy can mean. What is more, we need to acknowledge these needs within our discussions of how to collect visual materials as a part of our movement toward visual literacy. In this chapter the authors will contribute to the larger conversations around ableism, discuss the importance of adapting standards to reflect the values of our profession, and develop how to engage in this work through collecting. Along the way, each author articulates significant ethical issues that also require consideration.

# Ableism in Academic Libraries

While we acknowledge that "the language of disability is contentious and contested," it is important that we do not use this byproduct of white supremacy and homogenous values to further excuse not questioning our language or building more intentionality into the profession.[3] Our language has values ascribed and engraved in everyday use. While composing this chapter, we were aware of how the terms *shedding light*, *illuminating*, *visualizing*, and *seeing* presuppose positivity, intelligence, and articulation. People being heard or seen gets codified as something inherently positive. Thus, things *unseen*, *unsightly*, *underrepresented*, *limited*, *impaired*, and *overlooked* become concepts with a negative connotation.

In addition to antiquated terminology, much has been written about wanting to "diversify" the profession of librarianship, which should include those of all abilities and circumstances. However:

> the historical discrimination against diversity that the LIS profession seeks to address in its own membership, services, and spaces was *written* into existence via laws and policies and reinforced every day via naturalized institutional language practices. Yet language, power, and the hegemonic control they deploy and reproduce are rarely part of the conversations, let alone action plans, to increase LIS diversity.[4]

This discussion of language and its purposeful impact on our profession becomes especially apparent when reviewing the concept of visual literacy. With both the *ACRL Visual Literacy Competency Standards* (VL Standards) and the ACRL *Framework for Visual Literacy in Higher Education*: Companion Document to the *Framework for Information Literacy for Higher Education* (VL Framework), we hear that for learners to be fully engaged with society and the information landscape around them, they must engage with visuals and imagery.[5] Learners should "have opportunities to develop critical and ethical ways of engaging with visual information in order to become discerning citizens

in today's image-saturated society."[6] In the VL Framework, we get myriad knowledge practices and dispositions that visual literacy learners can develop, but even in a new document working to address discrimination and bias, we observe the mention of universal design (UD) only once. Importantly, we should acknowledge that it is not just the VL Framework that lacks a robust conversation on these topics. Rather, all discussions of visual literacy within our profession seem to also center ableism. UD, an approach to designing physical and digital environments to "be as accessible as possible from the outset, to as many people as possible,"[7] rarely gets mentioned in any of VL guidelines, standards, and frameworks, or evaluations of them, *because* "our institutional language and discourse around diversity, which is constitutive of the institutional relationship with diversity, is as much a product of the culture of assimilation and social disparity as of the ideals of equity and intellectual freedom."[8] This is why the unsaid is so important.

Moreover, the VL Framework doesn't acknowledge the possibility of a librarian/instructor with any form of visual needs. While many instances of discussing the need for inclusion within the VL Framework exist—we applaud the efforts of the authors to consider these possibilities when restructuring these guidelines—we also must review the missing components because there remains room for improvement. The entire document is about how to teach learners about visual literacy, but in its current iteration, it lacks consideration for in/accessibility of this content for instructor and student alike. One must question how much we are still relying on an ableist narrative as an LIS profession.

# Ableism in Visual Literacy

The ableist narrative impacts every official policy and guideline that the profession created. The concepts of visual literacy and the accompanying VL Framework are no different. The VL Framework states:

> While social justice is the primary focus of one of our four themes in this companion document, we believe social justice should not be siloed as a discrete entity for visual literacy learning. Rather, the pursuit of social justice must be recognized as integral to all aspects of visual practice.[9]

This statement implies that the document will utilize social justice to critically evaluate the practices under discussion in the same vein as critical librarianship. What we find is a focus on instructing students on the differences of situations for which images might be created or utilized and almost no review of the possible harm of the language employed in the VL Framework.

In the VL Framework, we see amazing work. There is an entire section on how visuals can never be neutral. However, the *Framework* documents don't acknowledge how the heavy reliance on visuals can be discriminatory since in/accessibility and universal design are not appropriately considered. Numerous discussions related to improvements with the VL Framework and access to visuals exist, including options like alt text, but we

see no examples of *how* to do so, no admission that those teaching these materials might need the improved accessibility themselves, or any discussions on decentering ableism in our work generally with visual mediums.

The very concept of visual literacy is to say how one should interpret what can be "seen." While the authors of the VL Framework work to confront issues of societal norms and social justice, the lack of discussion over the very idea of finding truth in "seeing" something a certain way remains concerning.

In the discussion of social justice and diversity, we rarely see an acknowledgment of centering the narrative of those with various abilities. This aligns with how our profession discusses such variation in abilities and diversity. It is no surprise that a lack of critical investigation for the very practices under discussion would permeate the VL Framework. However, we view the lack of addressing something such as dis/ability as just as important as the prevalence of the use of ubiquitous ableist language.

# Disability as Dynamic

The VL Framework strives to incorporate differences and inclusivity, which should be a standard. The VL Framework, though, does not commit fully through the evaluation of the language utilized and what remains unsaid throughout. We need to know that for those in our profession and those we teach:

> Disability is mutable and ever-evolving. Disability is both apparent and non-apparent. Disability is pain, struggle, brilliance, abundance, and joy. Disability is sociopolitical, cultural, and biological. Being visible and claiming a disabled identity brings risks as much as it brings pride.[10]

For the librarians teaching this visual literacy content, we need to acknowledge how

> Library literature, in general, looks outward at disability and accessibility, framing the conversation in terms of how to best serve users' needs. These articles often take a "retrofitting" approach that frames disability and accessibility as problems that need to be solved. They rarely look inward at the structural inequities in the profession itself.[11]

For the learners we teach, we must evaluate how this ableist language impacts the classroom, consultations, and all forms of learning. What harm does this cause to us and to our learners?

If we are to review our work through a critical model, which "question the assumptions that those who deviate from standards of ability necessarily want to achieve those standards," as opposed to a medical/deficit model, we can only expand our understanding of visual literacy.[12] A critical model will incorporate critical reflection on the practice as a whole and be more inclusive of various perspectives. Addressing the model allows

us to further the critical analysis that we promote through these standards in a more robust, authentic, and equitable way.

# Conceptualizing (and Problematizing) Visual Literacy

Visibility in the phrase *visual literacy* implies that, conversely, there must be people and experiences that are unseen or *not visible*. We conceptualize literacy based on that which we see. Ultimately, literacy allows for access, and access provides power. Power gives people more autonomy. Reframing visual literacy in this way situates it in a conversation about power and *what gets represented, whose perspectives remain present, and whose are missing*. Anastasia M. Collins further deepens the analysis of the power of this language:

> The context of who is using a phrase, who is receiving it, in what situation, through what shared frame of reference, and with what historical underpinnings all have inexorable influence over what a phrase "means" at the time it is uttered ...language can communicate existing power and dominance with relatively little effort or intention, and libraries, being shown through the intricacies of language at every conceivable level, can and do reproduce systems of oppression just that easily.[13]

The language we use to describe the concepts we employ in LIS requires not only definition, but also contextualization as a part of being visually literate. As information professionals work to standardize curriculum and assessment in visual literacy, integration of critical analysis will become essential.

As we conceptualize "visual literacy," we also need to acknowledge that those among us with sight impairments or those who cannot see may immediately be confronted with *not* being considered visually literate at all because they cannot see in the ways that society deems normal. Additionally, those among us with learning disabilities could feel excluded using the word *literacy* because they have been referred to as being "illiterate." As the application of these terms culminates in the assessment of one's competencies to be a "stronger" or "better prepared" information professional, we must critically evaluate our methods for evaluating others and how those decisions have intrinsically thwarted attempts to promote belonging.

Applying a critical lens to visual literacy can also be described as "oppression literacy," or integrating an acknowledgment of oppression into the ways in which we understand concepts. Collins describes "oppression literacy" in "Language, Power, and Oppression in the LIS Diversity Void":

> Another important concept within "oppression literacy" is the understanding that, while we can name and discuss systems of privilege and

> oppression as well as social power structures, we are never outside them when we do so.... If libraries wish to create effective pathways to equity, then we must acknowledge the many facets of inequity as a system and challenge *all* the barriers its creates.[14]

The very language we use to describe literacy is inherently wrought with the same values that it intends to challenge.

# Shifting the Narrative

While the VL Framework does incorporate the idea that visuals can "exacerbate technological, economic, or accessibility barriers that affect user experience," we do not get any language that would assist one in knowing *how* to help combat these issues and preemptively fight to make this visual literacy landscape more accessible.[15] Though later in the document there is a discussion of implementing accessibility, such as alt text, this strategy still centers the user's accountability and not the instructor. There doesn't appear to be consideration for teaching accessibility as a skill or a competency for information professionals to develop to be better instructors.

The incredibly necessary statement that "incorporating accessibility practices and principles can enrich the experience of visuals for all users" needs to be taken further.[16] We need to acknowledge how even in our attempts to value the needs of many, when we work to create standards, frameworks, and guidelines without a critical investigation into the homogeneity of our field, we can never truly reach the very tenets of social justice that the VL Framework itself discusses a need for:

> Pursuing social justice can include decentering whiteness, heteronormativity, and other hegemonic practices in visual collections and canons, improving accessibility of visuals and platforms, and opposing exploitative practices that deprive visual creators of intellectual property control or Indigenous communities of sovereignty. Visual literacy learners understand that pursuing social justice through visual creation, sharing, use, remix, and attribution takes continual effort and education.[17]

Here we see a list of things that social justice *can* include, and the VL Framework tells us visual literacy learners will always be learning. However, here we do not engage in a conversation about those who might not be able to see a visual or who might interpret a visual in a different way due to their abilities. We are also given options for what social justice *can* include without much of an explanation of what it *should or does* include.

As Alice Wong writes,

> Information access empowers us to flourish. It gives us equal opportunities to display our talents and choose what we want to do with our

> lives, based on interest and not based on potential barriers. When we give people the opportunity to succeed without limits, [it] will lead to personal fulfillment and a prospering life.[18]

While we envision that the authors of the VL Framework know this truth and worked to incorporate various abilities, in starting the document by stating, "Students across higher education must have opportunities to develop critical and ethical ways of engaging with visual information in order to become discerning citizens in today's image-saturated society," an entire swath of community members who might not have the same relationship with visuals gets ignored. Thus, the entire document becomes weighted down by this ableist othering.[19]

By beginning with centering the need for visuals, we get led too easily into forgetting how a reliance on a visual can disempower so many. In our attempt to build cohesion, are we really just pushing our profession from building a more inclusive learning community? And in doing this, are we further harming our profession? As Audre Lorde says, "Without community there is no liberation, only the most vulnerable and temporary armistice between an individual and her oppression. But community must not mean a shedding of our differences, nor the pathetic pretense that these differences do not exist."[20]

# The Importance of Counterstories and Cultural Production

> *If the disability community wants a world that's accessible to us, then we must make ideas and experiences of disability accessible to the world.*
>
> —Emily Ladau[21]

Stories offer powerful tools to interrupt dominant paradigms and what is conventionally "seen." As visual literacy concepts become applied to work in critical librarianship, we can refashion them in ways that amplify the lives and experiences of marginalized people. Again, Lorde describes how sharing stories created community and healing:

> Most of all I think of how important it is for us to share with each other the powers buried within the breaking of silence about our bodies and our health, even though we have been schooled to be secret and stoical about pain and disease.[22]

Attempts to silence the stories of disabled people causes further isolation and continues to pathologize the experiences of the disabled, who are the largest minority in the world.[23]

Modern social media creates opportunities for content creators to offer counterstories to the dominant ableist media paradigm, among other oppressive systems. These digital platforms liberate and promote the real, lived experiences of all people, including disabled people. In the recent book *Platforms and Cultural Production*, Thomas Poell, David Nieoborg, and Brooke E. Duffy discuss the proliferation of digital platforms, as well as their widespread cultural influence:

> The development and rapid uptake of digital platforms like YouTube, TikTok, Instagram, and WeChat are profoundly reconfiguring cultural production around the globe. Indeed, recent transformations in the cultural industries are staggering: longstanding—or "legacy"—media organizations are experiencing tremendous upheaval, while new industrial formations—live-streaming, social media entertainment, and podcasting, to name but a few—are evolving at breakneck speed.... Platformization involves not only what we call institutional shifts in markets, infrastructures, and governance, but also changes in *practices* of labor, creativity, and democracy. Platforms allow cultural workers to find new avenues to audiences and visibility.[24]

These digital platforms bring the power of storytelling and harness the agency of community through the immediacy of digital self-publication. Digital platforms increase visibility where previously these experiences were unseen in mainstream media. The power of these technologies being applied in a personal way allows for the sharing of stories and increases the possibility for healing from traumatic experiences. What we consume can be better curated to meet our needs, particularly for disabled people.

# "I Can't Breathe"

One of the many complications of having the stories of disabled people missing and therefore unacknowledged within the LIS profession is that the policies within the workplace reinforce ableism and further minimize the representation of disabled people. As Christine M. Moeller describes: "Academia positions disabled people as 'less than' the ideal norm and places undue burdens upon them to conform to an imagined ideal that fails to acknowledge differences in minds and bodies."[25] Requiring disabled people to conform to a "norm" that they can't meet regarding possible employment opportunities not only enforces job precarity but also can have fatal consequences.

Librarian Latanya Jenkins died after she was forced to comply with a sick leave policy that did not create space for her experiences or those of other employees living with illness.[26] Unfortunately, many workplaces view a disability policy as an "add-on" or "extra," and not the starting point for inclusivity of different lived experiences. This

communicates to community members that GLAM is *not* actually for everyone, as Moeller writes:

> Libraries must be accessible to both their users and their employees, for to do otherwise would send the wrong message and indicate that access and inclusion are only meant for some and not others…Failure to address these harmful practices will only continue reinforcing them and will prevent libraries from promoting social justice and creating a culture of inclusion and equity.[27]

Ultimately, representation and policies that support disabled people are necessary to create a more inclusive library environment—one where all library workers and users have access.

# Ethical Considerations for Collecting Visual Materials in Academic Libraries

While much of this chapter focuses on revisiting or deconstructing theoretical approaches to the limitations of instruction with visual literacy, academic libraries must similarly grapple with the ethics of including visual materials in their collections. If we have problematic instructional frameworks, then the content used to engage learners in both visual communication and visual literacy also demands closer examination.

In academic libraries, visual materials typically get thought of as a specialized grouping of items that convey information through illustrative means rather than written text. Visual materials are items of a pictorial nature, including prints, paintings, photographs, motion pictures, graphics, pictures, cartographic prints, and three-dimensional art.[28] While these can be found among general library collections (graphic novels, for example), they are most frequently located in a library's special collections or archives unit.

Whenever a particular item does not fall within the stricter collecting parameters typically associated with the library's published monographs, journals, or audiovisual content, the library's special collections unit steps in to fill the void. This provides the academic library with a very wide net in which to collect myriad unique, traditionally unpublished formats, filling significant documentary gaps representing a wide range of content creators and their worldviews. However, including these formats and corresponding content requires additional considerations, particularly when in order to gain access to these resources users have to overcome barriers steeped in ableism. Considerations go well beyond intentions for universal or inclusive design—and vitally creating better access for members of the disability community—but extends to ethics around access to materials that may cause undue harm to both content creators and third parties represented within. In the next section, we will delve more deeply into barriers with both

access and accessibility as pertains to the inclusion of visual materials—and subsequent visual literacy instruction—in academic libraries.

# Resources We Use and Issues of Accessibility

We must examine the current accessibility landscape for special collections and archives and highlight areas where access to visual materials has evolved to a degree but requires ongoing work. Finding guides (which are frequently transformed into MARC records for inclusion in broader library databases) and content management systems for digital content remain the primary tools for dissemination of visual material resources. Finding guides are nearly always strictly textual and provide critical context surrounding the creation or collections of a unique grouping of physical, electronic, or hybrid materials. They also typically include some sort of inventory or box listing. ArchivesSpace (see figure 12.1)—a free and popular open-source archival database primarily used to disseminate archival finding guides—largely conforms to international accessibility standards[29] and works closely with its development community to ensure that the application does not interfere with assistive technologies that users may use to navigate web-based applications in general.[30]

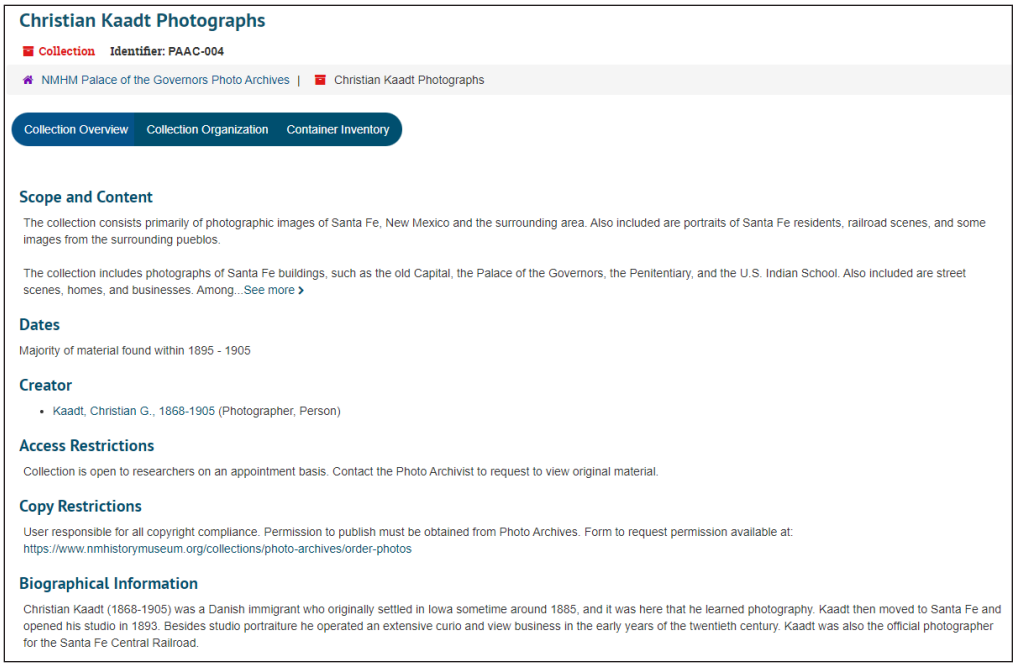


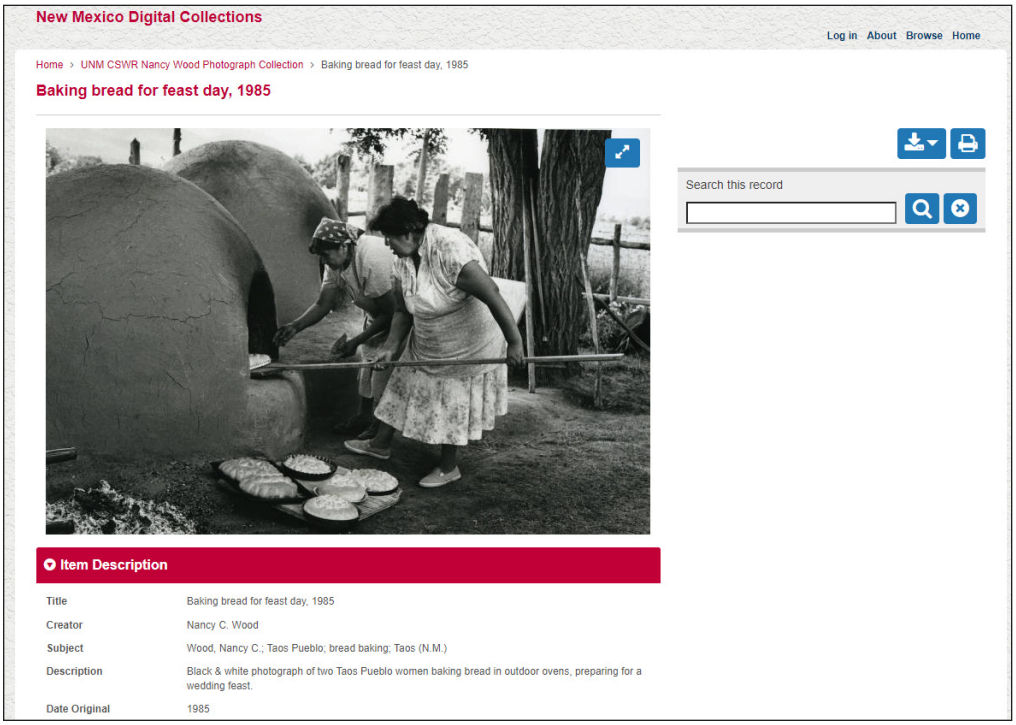

**Figure 12.1**

Screenshot of a finding guide (captured January 2022) built using ArchivesSpace. The finding guide describes the Christian Kaadt Photographs at the New Mexico History Museum. The screenshot emphasizes some of the collection's metadata fields, including Scope and Content, Dates, Creator, Access Restrictions, Copy Restrictions, and Biographical Information.

On the other hand, we think of content management systems as spaces where individual items (either born-digital or digitized from physical holdings) get described and provided for users who have access through a URL.

CONTENTdm (see figure 12.2), a popular content management system, similarly provides evidence of accessibility conformance.[31] Many academic libraries typically benefit from larger budgets and can afford the cost associated with a product like CONTENTdm, but for several smaller organizations, this cost is unreasonably high. This situation forces them to seek partnerships with larger repositories[32] or to find low- or no-cost alternative solutions for disseminating their content.

Regardless of the methods used to disseminate digitized content, institutions that have the ability to participate in this work greatly expand access/ability to their physical and born-digital collections. Collection development strategies are significantly informed by synthesizing access data and carving out new areas to collect based on what users request most frequently—in particular by making a closer examination of what gets requested that is *not* presently found.




## Figure 12.2

Screenshot of a digitized image (captured January 2022) from New Mexico Digital Collections, a resource built using CONTENTdm. The screenshot displays two Taos Pueblo women baking bread for Feast Day in 1985. The screenshot also displays a few metadata fields, including the Title, Creator, Subject, Description, and Original Date.

In the absence of tools that embed universal design and accessibility, academic libraries must invest in alternative solutions that confront ableism at its root. A critical first step requires acknowledging and reckoning with the reality of the significant power imbalances that exist within academic libraries. As previously discussed, this power and privilege almost always benefits those who are not disabled. Across the country, most major universities have a department or unit tasked specifically with the removal of barriers for those campus community members living with a disability. Many offer access to assistive technology devices and software widely available to the campus. Further still, some can help libraries navigate the complex and evolving Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and collaborate on solutions that ameliorate these previously purposely hidden challenges to create a much more inclusive experience for all.

But there is still more to do. For example, some libraries have created accessibility statements,[33] while others connect the importance of accessibility to their collection development policies.[34] Such high-level commitments (often signed off on by a dean or other administrator) signal to donors, users, and the dis/ability community that an institution values accessibility when providing access to its resources.

# The Role of Context

If budgetary limitations prevent an academic library from procuring more advanced tools to address limitations with accessibility and access to specialized visual materials, it becomes critical that it prioritize the dissemination of the contextual environment in which the materials were created. Context provides learners with the opportunity to deepen their understanding of materials' relationship to a particular person, culture, language, location, or time period.[35] Moreover, this contextual framing provides opportunities for learners to develop empathy for—or at least a greater understanding of—another person's lived experience. Whereas published material focuses on the content (and description) of a single item (e.g., a single book or video), unpublished material prioritizes the provision of the contextual environment in which groupings of materials were created or collected by an individual, family, organization, or government.

Trustworthiness of these materials relies on the depth and accuracy of this contextual description. Cataloging (or processing) materials in special collections involves a range of unique theoretical and practical processes that differ from traditional library database cataloging. Most often, finding guides contain descriptions of special collections or archival resources that then provide structured metadata fields that emphasize context over the content itself. Targeted selections from these collections frequently become digitized and made available in content management systems that provide metadata fields designed to balance both context and content.

All users are subject to the bias used in descriptive practice, especially among those on the receiving end of ableist practices who nonetheless rely on appropriate and accurate descriptions of the visual materials being analyzed. Traditionally, archivists have relied

on descriptions generated by content creators (and donors)—replete with any of their own personal biases—to convey trustworthy descriptions that link the resource with the context of its creation. In the absence of this direct description, archivists then attempt to describe resources using investigation and research into the materials using a series of highly subjective lenses informed by their own conscious and unconscious biases.

More recently, critics of traditional descriptive practices have encouraged models that refocus descriptions through new theoretical lenses—such as feminist disability and intersectional approaches—to provide further evidence of bias and power structures in archives.[36] There are signs of progress: Mukurtu CMS, a content management system built around respectful sharing of Indigenous content, provides for creator-led descriptions but elevates traditional Indigenous-led parallel descriptions of the same resource so users of the database benefit from the richness of both sources of context.

# Balancing Enthusiasm with Ethics

Just because we *can* collect something, does that mean we *should*? And *who* is collecting *what*? Is it even *theirs* to collect? Providing access to visual resources in academic libraries should include a discussion on the practice of acquisition and promote greater transparency in decision-making around (1) what is being acquired (and through what means), and (2) how materials are disseminated. Some ethical quandaries to consider can be found in the following examples:

1. A well-known regional photographer wishes to donate his life's work to an academic library. None of the digital files include alt text. Who bears responsibility for ensuring these images' accessibility for patrons (i.e., who is creating the alt text?), and at what point should they be made publicly available?
2. A series of hand-drawn maps from an amateur archeologist provide critical information about historic sites, but those same sites are culturally significant and sacred to one or more Indigenous communities.
3. A zine provides members of a marginalized community with contact information for individuals and organizations that can support them while also potentially putting those same individuals and organizations at risk of being targeted by hate groups.

As other scholars have recently advocated, academic libraries must use their place of privilege to provide more avenues for collaboration, particularly in the areas of collection development (the "what" to collect) and processing (the "how").[37] And as has been argued previously, academic libraries must also instruct appropriately in consideration of how *all* users engage with and access myriad formats in the collections. A great place to start would be first listening to the lived experiences of those in our profession with these disabilities and illnesses. Consider partnering with other campus entities (such as a disability resources unit) or a regional or state organization that works closely with the dis/ability community and responsibly having their experiences recorded, shared,

and preserved. Such comanagement ensures a more responsible representation of a region, the people within, and their activities, while also ensuring greater accessibility for everyone in its community. Instructors using these materials can then help foster a new generation of content creators to participate in the documentation and preservation of their lived experiences. A knowledge practice from the VL Framework's "perceiv[ing] visuals as communicating information" and "pursu[ing] social justice through visual practice" themes supports much of this approach, wherein learners "explore choices made in the production of visual communications to construct meaning or influence interpretation, especially with regard to representations of gender, ethnicity, race, and other cultural or social identifiers."[38]

Finally, it is important that we don't undervalue citations to credit these lived experiences. Not only do these citations link content with the source of their creation and appropriately provide credit where it is due,[39] but it also forces the user to reconsider use of these items based on new understandings of their context and original intent

# Conclusion

We acknowledge the work previously done by our colleagues in expanding the meaning of visual literacy as a subcategory of general information literacy. Our colleagues have articulated many significant concepts and theoretical approaches that overall serve as a good faith attempt to make the LIS field more equitable. Our critiques of the VL Framework encourage us to include even more diverse experiences, particularly for those who live with disabilities. Our feedback is grounded in the spirit of collaboration to push all of us to truly integrate social justice, equity, and inclusion principles into our LIS work.

James Baldwin famously provides a similar conceptualization of critique as care in this quote: "I love America more than any other country in this world, and, exactly for this reason, I insist on the right to criticize her perpetually."[40] We care deeply about this field and share in being passionate about the field. This is precisely why we analyze and work through what we see as issues pervading the field, particularly regarding accessibility.

The VL Framework serves as an excellent beginning. However, there exist several gaps with addressing universal accessibility and further problematization of the language employed throughout the Framework. We believe these gaps need to be addressed in our discussions on this topic and in future edits to the Framework and other guidance documents. Instructions regarding *how* to implement different components of the VL Framework are also necessary for the significant contributions of the document to be used in real time. This is also a practical application of accessibility with what we write. In this chapter we take a deep dive into the language that we use about visual literacy and the damage it can further perpetuate if we are not more inclusive.

When engaging in reflections on visual literacy pedagogy, there are questions to ask to support further inclusivity in higher education contexts:

- Reflect and ask yourself the reason behind using these visual literacy concepts. What are you attempting to highlight, and how can you be more aware of your biases in selecting this material?
- How can you create opportunities for your students to become cocreators in terms of sharing relevant visual content to your lessons?
- How can we place (or ground) visual content in a way that acknowledges the context in which it was created?
- Acknowledging continual learning and learning as a practice, how, as dynamics change, do we keep up with those changes as we learn how to be more inclusive and aware as the context alters?
- What are the ways that your institution accesses its materials? Are you or your students aware of those relationships in your discussions about the materials?
- What ethical considerations are missing when you interact with materials?

In conclusion, the overall landscape may at first appear bleak regarding how to balance what seem like competing priorities regarding accessibility. We have already come quite far on the journey to being more inclusive in LIS, though. By acknowledging the experiences of those who have been underrecognized and by welcoming everyone into the room regarding their individual experiences, particularly with disability, we create opportunities. Together, we can become not just more visually literate, but also more literate about how we learn from and communicate with one another.

# Notes

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