

Statement on Language in Archival Description:

The goal of the University of Georgia Special Collections Libraries is to describe archival collections in a manner that is honest and respectful to the individuals, organizations, and communities who create, use, and are represented in these resources. For many reasons, users may still find language in finding aids that is offensive and/or harmful for example, terms or phrases that are racist, sexist, homophobic, ableist, or otherwise demeaning to the people and communities described.

Why do these descriptions exist? And why might we retain harmful language in some of our finding aids?

- Many of our collections were acquired in the past and library staff used language to describe them that was accepted at the time.
- Whenever such descriptions were implemented by library staff, they may indicate prejudices, biases, or mistakes, which is important for libraries to be transparent about.
- Library staff often maintain the language used by collection donors or the original creators of the items to describe them, according to the [archival principle of provenance](#). Though this original language is part of the historical record and tells users something important about context, it can also reflect harmful biases, prejudices, and inaccuracies.

Our staff are committed to generating descriptions that uphold peoples' dignity and regularly update collection descriptions to reflect how individuals and communities self-identify. We recognize that this ongoing work necessitates a dialogue with the communities who use and are documented within collections.

If you encounter problematic descriptions, please notify us at sclib@uga.edu. Archives staff will assess the problematic language to determine whether to edit the language, preserve the historic record, or find another viable solution using professional practices and guidance from the Society of American Archivists.