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2016 ALA Annual Conference

This resolution was adopted by the ALA Council on Sunday, June 26, 2016

**RESOLUTION IN SUPPORT OF THE PROFESSIONAL CATALOGING
PROCESSES AND DETERMINATIONS OF THE LIBRARY OF CONGRESS**

Whereas the Library of Congress (Library) has a long-established, often used process for reviewing and updating outdated subject headings and establishing new ones as needed that preserves and cross-references all prior versions of updated headings;

Whereas decisions to update a subject heading are based on many considerations, including "literary warrant:" the frequency with which a term is or is not used in print and other dynamic resources that, by their nature, change with and reflect current social structures and norms;

Whereas for headings that refer to groups of people, special attention is paid to: popular usage; terms used by members of the group to self-identify; avoiding terms widely considered to be pejorative toward the group being described;

Whereas as publicly urged by the American Library Association (ALA) in its formal Resolution of January 12, 2016, the Library reasonably and properly concluded that, when used in reference to people, the long-used terms "illegal" and "alien" have in recent decades acquired derogatory connotations, become pejorative, and been associated with nativist and racist sentiments;

Whereas referring to undocumented persons (as opposed to forms of conduct) as "illegal" increasingly has been widely acknowledged, particularly in recent years, as dehumanizing, offensive, inflammatory, and a racial slur;

Whereas accordingly, many national news organizations (including the Associated Press, USA Today, ABC, Chicago Tribune, and Los Angeles Times) categorically have stopped using the word "illegal" to describe human beings as a matter of editorial policy;

Whereas the Pew Research Center compared use of the term "illegal aliens" in U.S. newspapers during the same two-week period in 1996, 2002, 2007 and found that use of that phrase declined precipitously over the most recent 6-year period surveyed, appearing in 21% of news reports in 2007 but just 5% in 2013: a 76% reduction in use and an all-time low;

Whereas the Library's process in this case was rigorous, transparent, and consistent with both the highest standards of professional cataloging practice and its own past practices;

Whereas upon due consideration, the Library proposed in March 2016 prospectively to cease use of the subject headings "Aliens" and "Illegal aliens;"

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Whereas legislation has been introduced, and other action taken in the U.S. House of Representatives and by certain United States Senators, intended to prevent the Library from implementing those specific proposals; and

Whereas such direct intervention by Congress in the Library's subject heading selection determinations is unprecedented in living memory notwithstanding that the Library proposes and implements thousands of subject heading changes annually for the benefit of scholarship and research; now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the American Library Association (ALA), on behalf of its members:

1. reaffirms its unequivocal support for the Library of Congress' (Library) apolitical, professional determination to cease use prospectively of the subject headings "Illegal aliens" as articulated in its formal Resolution of January 12, 2016, and here also endorses the Library's specific March 2016 proposal to retire both that term and the subject heading "Aliens" as it relates to non-extraterrestrials (March Proposals);
2. emphasizes for the particular benefit of legislators that the purposes and uses of the Library's subject headings have for more than a century been and remain entirely different from those animating Congress' selection of subject headings in the United States Code (Code), and that the Library's subject heading choices have no, and should have no, effect upon or relationship to the Code; and
3. instructs the ALA Executive Director to convey the entirety of this Resolution to all germane Members of Congress, media of all forms, and such other parties both within and outside of government, including but not limited to other national non-profit organizations, as may assist the Library in preserving its venerable independent cataloging processes and in implementing its March Proposals.

Adopted by the Council of the American Library Association
Sunday, June 26, 2016, in Orlando, Florida



Keith Michael Fiels

Executive Director and Secretary of the ALA Council