Diversity at Scale: The Necessity of Integrating Social Justice into Technical Development

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PoC in LIS Summit
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Reparative Structural Approaches to Library and Archives Platform Development

Land (and Foundation) Acknowledgement

- UM founded with a land grant from the Council of Three Fires (Ojibwe, Odawa, and Potawatomi) in the 1817 Treaty of Fort Meigs
- Sacramento is on unceded Nisenan territory
- Both places that historically and continue to rely on the labor of Black people without respecting the humanity of Black people
- Honor the spirits of the Waters

How did I get into LIS?

Promotional image for Shola Lynch's documentary "Free Angela and All Political Prisoners" showing the title and and an image of Angela Davis, from filmmaker's website

Materials exist but are not accessible

- Inaccurate metadata makes materials related to marginalized communities hard to find and understand
- Metadata quality issues are a consequence of inequities in the field and have a disproportionate impact on certain communities

How can digital platforms help?

How can aggregate platforms help?

What is an aggregate platform?

- provides access to materials from multiple institutions in a single place
- may host content or only index and link to it (like google)
- Examples:
  - HathiTrust
  - iDigBio
  - DPLA

Aggregation and the Promise of Scale

- Users can access everything in one place
    - People have become used to searches working like google
    - This is especially important for subjects where materials are dispersed
- Programmatic assessment and remediation
    - Problems at scale require solutions at scale
    - Issues can be identified and fixed across collections rather than piecemeal
    - Certain technological solutions require data sets of a specific size
    - Technical expertise can be pooled across institutions, providing support for smaller or less resourced institutions

Just because something is online does not mean that it's accessible

Do aggregate platforms make things worse?

- Technology viewed as the solution without an actual understanding of the problem
- Aggregate platforms display items without context
- Often undoes the care (technical and content) of earlier reparative digital efforts

Chinese in California

- Intentional about providing context for materials and processing decisions
- Context is completely lost in aggregate platforms

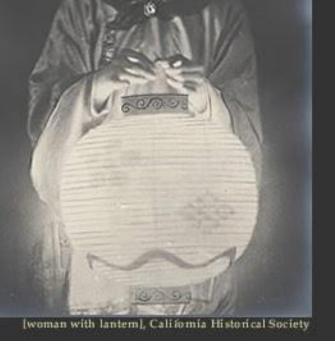# Chinese in California, 1850-1925

The Bancroft Library

This website offers a topical approach to the material presented in the Chinese in California digital archive. The resources represented are from The Bancroft Library and The Ethnic Studies Library, University of California, Berkeley; and The California Historical Library, San Francisco. Selections range in format, with books, pamphlets, prints, photographs, manuscripts, sheet music, etc. illustrating aspects of the story. Much of the history of the Chinese in California is embedded in resources that discuss California in a broader context, and thus a topical approach serves as the best way of gathering together the diverse materials presented here.

The Chinese in California digital archive was developed in 1998-1999 as part of the Library of Congress' American Memory website, an online resource compiled by the Library of Congress National Digital Library Program. The Library of Congress American Memory website was retired in 2015 and is no longer available online.

- Chinese and Westward Expansion
- San Francisco Chinatown
- Chinese Communities outside San Francisco
- Agriculture, Fishing and Related Industries
- Anti-Chinese Movement and Exclusion
- Sentiments Concerning the Chinese
- Oroville Chinese Temple
- Finding Aid
- About the Project

screenshot of the Bancroft home page for *Chinese in California*

[woman with lantern], California Historical Society

Chinese Materials in DPLA

DPLA search results for "Chinese" (march 2019)

AAS ARC 2000/43 **Chinese League of Justice of America miscellany 1909-1910**

Creator/Collector: Worley, Franklin B.

Scope and Content Note

Contains typescript reports of July 26 and Oct. 8, 1909 made by the League's attorney, Franklin B. Worley, regarding his activities in response to negative publicity against the Chinese, particularly concerning the Chinese mission schools and the reported murder of Elsie Siegel by Leon Ling. Includes Bulletin No. 1, issued by the League on Sept. 1, 1909, devoted to a discussion of statements made by Sir Robert Hart, for many years an official in China, concerning Chinese converting to Christianity. Also includes a letter, dated Aug. 20, 1910, from Charles S. Whitman, District Attorney for New York county, enclosing a copy of a report from the Police Commissioner in response to complaints against the showing of the picture, "The Chinatown Trunk Mystery," based on the Elsie Siegel murder.

Subjects and Indexing Terms

Chinese -- Missions -- California -- San Francisco.
Chinese Americans -- California -- San Francisco -- Social conditions.
Chinese Americans -- California -- San Francisco.
Chinese Americans -- Civil rights -- California -- San Francisco.
Chinese Americans -- New York (State) -- New York.
Discrimination against Chinese.
Discrimination in criminal justice administration.
Hart, Robert, -- Sir, -- 1835-1911.
Siegel, Elsie.

AAS ARC 2000/43: 26 July **"Report of Progress Made So Far" 26 July 1909** 👁
ark:/13030/hb8n39n9bz

    Contributing Institution: Ethnic Studies Library

Screen shot from the OAC finding aid, showing contextual information hierarchically at the source collection rather than the item level.

"The Wild Cat"

View Full Item ☑

Partner	California Digital Library
Contributing Institution	California Historical Society
Publisher	CaliforniaHistoricalSociety, North Baker Research Library, 678 Mission Street,San Francisco, CA 94105-4014; http://www.californiahistoricalsociety.org/collections/northbaker_research.html
Subjects	Chinese--California--San Francisco--Photographs Chinese American businesspeople--California--San Francisco Chinese Americans in business--California--San Francisco
Location	Chinatown (San Francisco, Calif.) Commerce. Pictorial works.
Type	image
URL	http://ark.cdlib.org/ark:/13030/hb3w1002x7 ☑
Rights	Please contact the contributing institution for more information regarding the copyright status of this object.

DPLA screenshot of "The Wild Cat" (March 2019)

Why is the digital aggregation dream unfulfilled?

Are digital aggregators racist?

Short answer: yes.

Long answer: yes and it's for structural rather than simply individual bias reasons.

Who are the developers in library spaces?

- developers often do not have a library background
- people interested in political implications of LIS are not encouraged to go into technical fields
- consultation with communities happens for content after platform is made, not during development

Towards a Structural Solution

- cultural shift regarding how technical folks in LIS understand their work
- political conversations and structural analysis needs to happen in technical spaces
- be honest about whether something is a technical or a political hurdle

Questions?

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Discussion Questions

- How do we address the political challenges of trying to advocate for changes that would technically doable but cause institutional anxiety?
- How do we facilitate active and meaningful engagement across different parts of the field and wider communities?
- Technology will not save us, but technology can help -- what are our wildest platform development dreams?