

Presenting Legacy Descriptions

A worksheet produced in August 2021 as part of the project 'Legacies of Catalogue Descriptions and Curatorial Voice: Opportunities for Digital Scholarship' (AHRC, Project Reference [AH/T013036/1](#))

Whilst legacy catalogue data appears in many catalogues, it is often difficult – and sometimes impossible – to identify the fact that these data were the product of cataloguers working in socio-cultural contexts very different to our own.

During the 'Legacies' project we have discussed the potential for misunderstanding or harm that might be caused by legacy descriptions appearing in web descriptions for items without sufficient understanding of the context in which those legacy descriptions were produced. To consider this problem further, James wrote '[Presenting Legacy Descriptions – a provocation](#)', which contains initial proofs-of-concept for presenting and reusing legacy catalogue descriptions.

Commonwealth immigration


This article is more than 2 years old

Home Office destroyed Windrush landing cards, says ex-staffer

Exclusive: Evidence of UK arrivals discarded despite case worker protests, says former employee

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Tue 17 Apr 2018 14:20 BST

6,860



Who are the Windrush generation? - video explainer

The Home Office destroyed thousands of landing card slips recording Windrush immigrants' arrival dates in the UK, despite staff warnings that the move would make it harder to check the records of older Caribbean-born residents experiencing residency difficulties.

These proofs-of-concept were inspired by practices common to news websites, where banners are used to 'flag' the age of articles. This 'flagging' is in addition to metadata displaying a date of publication, which mirrors – where present – the kinds of metadata that collecting institutions use to inform readers of the legacy character of a record (or parts of a record).

In this worksheet, these proofs-of-context are used as discussion points. We anticipate that completing the worksheet will take no longer than one hour, and that by sharing these ideas, pathways towards implementation (e.g. the development a toolkit of points to consider) can be opened up. As result we suggest that to get the most out of the worksheet, you to work through it in small groups.

1. Looking at the example above, what can we learn from practices used by newspaper websites?
2. Below is a proof-of-concept for flagging a legacy description associated with [an item at the British Museum](#), for which the source of the 'description' is listed in metadata field 13 ('Curator's Comments') of 20. Does this 'flagging' support user interaction with the record in positive ways? Are there limitations to this approach?

The British Museum

Previous | Menu

print; satirical print

Object Type
print
satirical print


Museum number
1872.1012.4947

Title
Object: Kitchen stuff.

Description This description is based on cataloguing that is more than 50 years old
A fat cook sleeps by the kitchen fire in an arm-chair with her feet high up on the chimney-piece. She holds a glass filled from a bottle of 'Cherry Bounce' at her elbow. Close beside her a comely plump kitchen-maid is also asleep, with her arm round the neck of a black footman who sleeps on her shoulder. All have beatific smiles. Before the fire a cat sleeps on the back of a dog. Cooking utensils stand on the chimney-piece and hang from the wall; dishes on a dresser complete a crowded interior.
1 November 1810.
Hand-coloured etching

View less

Producer name
Print made by: [Thomas Rowlandson](#)
Published by: [Thomas Tegg](#)



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3. Below is [a record](#) from the British Library's Explore Archives and Manuscripts Catalogue (often referred to as IAMS), which – we can presume from the language used – is the produce of legacy cataloguing (more on which below the image) but where the catalogue entry provides insufficient information to alert the reader to that fact. What kind of flagging might improve the user experience?

[Advanced Search](#)

From Santiniketan; 35 numbered photographs, with a separate description: A girl of that tribe; the children look very negroid. Photographer: Bake, Arnold Adriaan

Mss Eur F191/332(1107) : Dec 1933

Details
[I want this](#)
[Browse this collection](#)

Actions ▾

Title: From Santiniketan; 35 numbered photographs, with a separate description: A girl of that tribe; the children look very negroid. Photographer: Bake, Arnold Adriaan

Collection Area: Visual Arts

Reference: Mss Eur F191/332(1107)

Creation Date: Dec 1933

Extent and Access:

Extent:
1 item

Conditions of Use: Restrictions to access apply please consult Asian and African Studies Print Room staff

Language: Not applicable

Contents and Scope:

Contents:

Genre: Portrait Photography

Group portrait; a girl of that tribe [Pulliyan]; the children look very negroid.

Physical characteristics:

Dimensions: 55 mm x 81 mm

Format: Loose

Secondary Support: None

Technique: Photograph; Photographic Print; Gelatin Silver Print

Former Identifiers: I.O.320 (13)

Related persons, etc: Bake, Arnold Adriaan, Unspecified

Related subjects: Ethnic groups
South Asian Ethnic Groups

Links

- > [Is part of Mss Eur F191 Papers of Arnold and Cornelia Bake, indologists, scholars and performers of Indian music 1910-1979](#)
- > [Is part of Mss Eur F191/330-335 Arnold and Cornelia Bake, indologists: postcards and photographs Unspecified](#)
- > [Is part of Mss Eur F191/332 Box containing copies of photographs in the Arnold Bake Collection... Unspecified](#)
- > [Photographer: Bake, Arnold Adriaan, Unspecified](#)
- > [Topic: Ethnic groups](#)
- > [Topic: South Asian Ethnic Groups](#)

[Mss Eur F191/332\(1107\)](#) is a photograph taken in 1933 by Arnold Adriaan Bake. It is part of the collections “Papers of Arnold and Cornelia Bake, Indologists, scholars and performers of Indian music (1910-1979)” (Mss Eur F191) that was acquired by the British Library between 1980 and 1991 (see the [finding aid for the collection](#)). As we can see above, the ‘Title’ field for the photograph indicates that the title recorded in IAMS is, in part, transcribed from ‘a separate description’ that this photograph appears ‘with’.