

As our world continues to focus and reevaluate how we label and describe people in a better and non-derogatory way, librarians and cataloguing need to reflect those changes. When it comes to cataloguing, our code of ethics has some choices on how to continue to label people and works. Bair states that “catalogers are professionals and experts in a field that impacts society for good or harm; they must be aware of the ethical implications and responsibilities of what they do.” As cataloguers, we want to provide our patrons with as much information as possible, but we also want to be respectful of the subject. One of which is the labeling of the gender of the author of a work. In today’s society, we recognize that people do not view gender and sexuality as being only male and female; rather, as fluid. Even if someone defines their gender-based on the one they were assigned at birth, they may not want their gender documented. In Billey, Drabinski, & Roberto’s article, the author they had the chance to work with did not want her gender assigned, although she identified as cisgender female. “The author explained that gender was simply not an important aspect of the work in question, or the body of work the author intended to produce. Indeed, the author expressed hope that one day gender would no longer be a social marker.” In Dobreski, Qin, & Resnick’s article, they focused on historical cataloguing and marking physical descriptions and how previously circus performers were labeled as “freaks” based off of their physical abnormalities, which we now view through a medical lens. However, the authors are trying to balance a historical perspective and a contemporary one so that when a patron is attempting to access the information, they will be able to locate what they need.

One connection is the idea that physical descriptions used to catalogue people, authors, works, etc., need to change from how they were done in years past. Cataloguers are running into the issue that catalogue rules do not allow for any nuances to be made. These nuances can be found when it comes to labeling gender or physical markers. A second connection between the articles is the idea that the cataloguers provide information but can turn into being subjective on what is or is not included. Bair states that “Bade (2002, 11) has carefully documented the extent and harm in loss of access and misinformation done by inaccurate labeling in classification, subject analysis, and authority files in library catalogs.” This subjectiveness in cataloguing can be purposeful or by accident and, in both cases, can cause harm. The role of cataloguing is essential and yet it is more complicated than at first glance. Cataloguers want to record correctly and, at times, may run into some of the issues brought up in these three articles.