

Statement on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion, and Acknowledgment of Harmful Content

A key tenet of Wheaton College's mission is to develop and continue dialogue with our own historical past and explore how it has shaped our communal present, for better or for worse. This statement is an inexcusably late attempt to more formally and substantially commit ourselves to the task of bringing to light some of Wheaton's own injustices toward its community members of color. Archives exist as a radical promise to the future: they preserve the past to better the future. Though the role of the Archives is to collect, preserve, and make accessible institutional history to researchers and community members, it is important to note that archives and libraries are, inherently, not neutral houses of information, nor are archives ever "complete". They are part and parcel of the structures of inequity, exclusion of histories, and abuses of power towards marginalized peoples, despite our ongoing goals of inclusive collection and holistic deposit of materials. It is disappointing and angering to us, personally, that the stories and voices of people of color have been excluded, overlooked, and hidden, and that our policies and practices often perpetuate the structural inequities that pervade society. We are examining our role in these oppressive structures and taking action for change by collecting, preserving, and reexamining College history in light of the heartbreaking experiences we have—shamefully, only now—begun to understand. The Archives affirms that Black Lives Matter.

Objects in historical collections reflect the attitudes, ideas, and norms of the era and culture in which they were created or collected. As such, some materials available in our collections may contain offensive imagery, language, or opinions, including disparaging portrayals or descriptions of persons based on characteristics such as race, gender, sexual orientation, national origin, disability, or religion. Some materials may depict ceremonies, artifacts, or clothing from historically marginalized cultures in a disrespectful or exploitative fashion.

These materials are presented for the purpose of preserving the historical record. Their presence in the archives does not constitute any endorsement of the viewpoints or sentiments expressed within them by Wheaton College or the Madeleine Clark Wallace Library, which strive to manifest an inclusive, welcoming, and respectful environment serving the information needs of our community.

In order to help viewers better understand the origins, context, and historical significance of the materials in our collections, the library and archives provide descriptive information (metadata) to accompany all items such as titles, dates,

author names, and notes on the item's history and origins. Whenever possible, best practices established by library and archival professional organizations are followed when creating these descriptions. Language from the original item is typically transcribed directly and without redaction, especially for titles. Standardized topical terms created by external sources (such as Library of Congress) are also used to provide better searching and browsing of the collections.

However, adherence to these practices may sometimes result in harmful or outdated language appearing in the descriptions for some materials, particularly in titles or topical headings. We strive to balance these practices with our goal of reducing the hurtful impact that these collections may have.

These policies are consistent with established professional guidelines such as [Access to Digital Resources and Services](#) from the American Library Association, the [ACRL Code of Ethics for Special Collections Librarians](#), and the [SAA Core Values Statement and Code of Ethics](#) from the Society of American Archivists.

This statement draws on the work of other institutions who have created similar statements for their digital collections, including the [University of Wisconsin Milwaukee Libraries](#), [Temple University Libraries](#), the Digital Public Library of America's [Black Women's Suffrage Digital Collection](#), and the [Digital Commonwealth](#).