

L 400 - Ethics and Demographic Group Terms

BACKGROUND: *Establishing and using demographic group terms raises important ethical considerations. Naming demographic groups and identifying individuals as members of those groups must be done with accuracy and respect. This instruction sheet describes the issues of privacy and sensitivity that users should consider when working with LCDGT. (Some of the instructions were drawn from the Report of the PCC Ad Hoc Task Group on Gender in Name Authority Records.)*

1. General rule. Assign one or more demographic terms with which a person self-identifies and explicitly discloses. Self-identification is essential. Do not make assumptions about groups that may be associated with a person based on photographs or the use of gendered titles or pronouns. Typical sources for self-identification include:

- Biographical information published in the resource
- Biographical information provided by the publisher
- Author's personal website or social media profiles
- Direct communication with the author
- For non-contemporary persons use works by the person as well as biographies, obituaries, articles, etc. about the person

2. Gender terms. When assigning gender terms, follow these best practice guidelines:

- Record Males or Females in accordance with the term used by the person, or with gendered pronouns and/or inflected nouns used in the source
- Do not assume gender identity based on pictures or names
- Do not dig for given names or genders assigned at birth
- For transgender/transsexual persons record the terms Transgender people or Transsexuals in accordance with the term used by the person
- For well-known persons who publicly transition between male and female mid-life and have literary warrant for recording both genders, record both Males and Females and other terms as applicable
- Record gender terms based on information in the source. For example, if a person claims to be a cisgender male, record Cisgender persons and Males. If a person just says "as a young boy..." or uses male pronouns then record Males, but do not assume he is cisgender or transgender
- Record dates associated with a gender only when the person explicitly provides dates of transition
- Take into account the following considerations before assigning a term:
 - The potential for this information to harm the person through outing or violating the right to privacy
 - An indication that the person consents to having this information shared publicly
 - Whether the information will help a library user in the search process