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The SRJ invites submissions from currently enrolled graduate students from all disciplines and institutions. Submit original research, literature reviews, book reviews, or evidence summaries, covering topics in all fields of library and information science theory, policy, application, or practice. The journal accepts submissions on a rolling basis and publishes two issues annually. For more information, please visit: scholarworks.sjsu.edu/ischoolsrj
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Editorial

*Bringing Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion to the Student Research Journal*
Amber Passey, Editor-In-Chief, *Student Research Journal*, San José State University

Invited Contribution

*Reading Nation Waterfall*
Anthony Chow, Ph.D., Director, School of Information, San José State University

Editorial

*Gender-Neutral Language Policy at the Student Research Journal*
Ben Brown, Managing Editor, *Student Research Journal*, San José State University
May 2023

Bringing Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion to the Student Research Journal

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Bringing Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion to the Student Research Journal

Keywords
DEI, diversity, equity, inclusion

About Author
Amber has studied human development and applied linguistics, earning a B.S. from Brigham Young University and an M.A. in Applied Linguistics from the University of Utah, respectively. In her personal and professional life, she has developed skills in teaching, editing, and playing with young children. Passey anticipates graduating from SJSU's MLIS program in December 2023, after which she plans to focus her work on Children's Librarianship.

This editorial is available in School of Information Student Research Journal: https://scholarworks.sjsu.edu/ischoolsrj/vol13/iss1/1
An important movement in the LIS field has been the increased attention to issues of diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility. The iSchool here at San José State University recently concluded a year-long project showcasing DEI groups, needs, experiences, and resources across four newsletters and four webinars. Another example of the growing importance of DEI can be found on ALA’s website which showcases news and resources for DEI in librarianship. This issue of the Student Research Journal features research and policies in the DEI realm affecting the SRJ, our editors, our authors, and our readership.

This academic year I had the incredible opportunity to work on the Reading Nation Waterfall grant project led by iSchool director Dr. Anthony Chow. Dr. Chow’s invited contribution highlights the efforts of this project to bring books to Native American children while increasing their families’ engagement with their tribal libraries.

Beginning the academic year at the SRJ, we adopted a Gender Neutral Language Policy that was researched and proposed by our Managing Editor, Ben Brown. He shares what he learned and how we have implemented this policy and then provides a framework for other organizations to consider how gender neutral language may increase their inclusivity.

Another project completed this year aims to make the journal more accessible to fellow LIS professionals. Copy editor, Mia Lewis, consolidated several years of research from former editors regarding adding a social media coordinator. After writing a proposal justifying the need for the position and the benefits it would offer the journal in reaching the goals outlined in the strategic plan, the proposal was put before the faculty advisory board who approved the position and allowed one credit of INFO 298 to be earned each semester.

Though this issue is brief, it represents unseen work done by our Editorial Team, authors, faculty advisors, and our outreach efforts. Since last June, our Managing Editor, Ben Brown, has written twenty-eight consolidated referee reports (CRRS) which contain the feedback from our editors to authors on their submitted manuscripts. In the 22-23 academic year our Editorial Team reviewed and provided feedback on twenty-two manuscripts.

As the Editor-In-Chief and the Managing Editor, we also had the opportunity to be the first graduate students to present at the monthly LIS Pedagogy Chat sponsored by faculty at Simmons University where we shared our work at the Student Research Journal with the attendees. Additionally, Ben and I represented the SRJ by presenting the special
projects we completed at the College of Professional and Global Education Online Student Conference and each received an Outstanding Student Presentation Award. Through these efforts we, as a team, have grown in our professional skills and preparation to complete our degrees at San José State University.

We are excited to welcome Odin Halvorson and Marc Hoffeditz as the new EIC and ME for AY 2023-24. This is the first time the leadership team consists of two male students. We wish them much success as they embark on their journey.

Acknowledgments

The Managing Editor, Ben Brown, has been instrumental in coordinating editors with submissions, creating reports, and providing insights on the work of the SRJ. A special thank you as well to the Editorial Team who were committed to providing an excellent and timely peer review experience for authors.

Our faculty advisor, Dr. Anthony Bernier, has mentored me in the role of Editor-In-Chief and has spent many hours strengthening the Editorial Team’s understanding of and skills in LIS scholarship, academic discourse, and the peer review process. I am deeply grateful for his guidance.

We also express appreciation for the Faculty Advisory Board led by iSchool Director, Dr. Anthony Chow, and Associate Director, Dr. Linda Main for their continued and enthusiastic support of the Student Research Journal. A special thank you to Dr. Norman Mooradian for his consultation on a manuscript about artificial intelligence. Additionally, we acknowledge the role of the Alumni Advisory Group in helping the SRJ Editorial Team identify trends in the field, needs of professionals, and ways the Journal can support graduate students as they join the LIS profession.

With the completion of several special projects by Editorial Team members and support from the Faculty Advisory Board, we look forward to the growth of the SRJ as an accessible channel for graduate students to join the scholarly conversation.
May 2023

Reading Nation Waterfall

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Reading Nation Waterfall

Keywords
early literacy, Native American tribal libraries, Libraries & Native Americans

About Author
Dr. Anthony Chow is a full professor and the Director of SJSU's School of Information. He holds a doctorate in instructional design and technology and a master's in educational psychology from Florida State University. He excels in the triple I's - information science, instructional technology, and information technology - and has taught for the past 23 years in three LIS programs specializing in web design and usability, information seeking, early children's literacy, leadership and management, and library technology integration. He is the son of immigrants from China and is married to his high school sweetheart, has three adult children, and three (one just passed away - RIP Max) dogs.

This invited contribution is available in School of Information Student Research Journal:
https://scholarworks.sjsu.edu/ischoolsrj/vol13/iss1/2
Reading Nation Waterfall (RNW) is a three year $1.4 million dollar grant from the Institute of Museum and Library Services focused on one goal: to increase access to reading and libraries for Native American children and families. Our name serves as a metaphor for the creation of book ecosystems where there is a "waterfall" of new and used books being added and circulated within our five tribal communities.

Our grant is seeking to implement a solution to the findings of a year-long pilot study with the Blackfoot Tribe where we found that many of their children were growing up with very few books or any books at all. Furthermore, despite living very close to a library, many parents reported they were not using their libraries either. Add in a high instance of poverty on the reservation, and a number of children were growing up in book deserts.

As a complex problem, we have come up with a multifaceted plan to try and address three different barriers to books and libraries we have identified - access, convenience, and relevance.

Figure 1

*Dr. Chow sharing books with children participating in the RNW project*
First is Access - books are expensive and so we are providing funding for books. Parents report lack of use of their libraries and so we have installed three little free libraries in strategic places where kids from 0-10 will be. We want children to have easy and browsable access to brand new books.

Second is Convenience - life is busy and single parents or those in poverty are often even busier trying to make ends meet. People in poverty often do not visit libraries due to a lack of time or transportation and so we have identified three locations where parents and children will be: Head Start Centers (children 3-5 years old living in poverty), elementary schools, and either a public or tribal library or other public places children and families are likely to be.

Third is Relevance - the tribes are helping us curate, select, and author original works to place in the little free libraries and their own school and public libraries. Furthermore, we are providing all public libraries with funding to study and provide new programs, services, and resources so that they are more relevant to the communities they are trying to serve.

Our five tribal partners represent four states - California, Montana, New Mexico, and North Carolina - and include the Yurok Tribe (CA), the Northern Cheyenne (MT), Santo Domingo Pueblo (NM), and the Lumbee and Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians (NC). Each partnership includes "three legs of a stool" - Public/Tribal Library, School Library, and Head Start Center.

In order to measure the impact of our project we must have data. RNW is using what is called a logic model, which measures goals at three levels - inputs, outputs, and outcomes. How many books have we distributed? How many new resources, services, and programs have our libraries offered? How many books have been read at home? How much has library usage increased?

Our outcome measures are also important. What impact, if any, did we have on children's literacy and also the community's use of libraries? Our bodacious goal is to increase reading scores at kindergarten and 4th grade levels.

Right now, we are just getting started and have experienced a number of unexpected challenges in implementing the grant. First, given the complexity of grant requirements and the ensuing subcontracts that each tribe has to sign, we have had a lot of delays in getting the grant off the ground because we cannot start spending funds until all paperwork is signed. Second, the grant was awarded during the pandemic (Fall 2021 and again Fall 2023 after I left UNC Greensboro and came to San Jose State). This means that communication and general disruption in all of our lives was present which has further delayed getting the project started. Third, communication challenges with partners - at least three organizations at each tribe - has also been an issue. As we are spread out, lack of communication has led to misunderstandings and at times unfinished paperwork or lack of data. Finally, we lost the Crow Tribe because the principal changed and the new principal did not
want to continue with the grant. As a result we added the first tribe in California, which was the Yurok Tribe.

Despite these challenges, the project continues to gain momentum and has been supported by the iSchool both financially - the project manager and social media coordinator are funded student assistants - and, most importantly, by INFO 298 Special Topics students (11 students since Fall 2022). Two tribes have now finished their paperwork and the other three are close behind them.

We have a saying on our research team - "It is all about the children." I say that when things get particularly difficult and I get frustrated. I remember it is about the kids and our clear belief that the love of reading, and all of the well researched benefits that come with it, starts simply with access and providing children the opportunity to choose books that they want to read. All children deserve to have this opportunity and we all will succeed together because of it.
May 2023

Gender-Neutral Language Policy at the Student Research Journal

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About Author
Ben earned a B.A. in European History from California State University, Fresno in 2013 and an M.A. in Modern European History from SJSU in 2018. He started his Master of Library and Information Science degree program in the spring of 2021 and has a focus in web programming and information architecture. In that time, he has been working as an intern for the University of Michigan as a researcher and librarian on a platform called 1cademy. Beyond his studies, Ben enjoys fly fishing and reading science fiction novels.
In the Fall of 2022, the Student Research Journal (SRJ) added a new gender-neutral language policy. This policy included a proposal for several changes to the training and rubrics used by editors. It was researched, written, and proposed by the managing editor, Benjamin Brown. This policy reflects a culture of inclusivity and accessibility that the SRJ espouses and also provides a good example of how similar policies could be adopted in other organizations. This paper provides some background on why this policy was pursued, describes how the policy was drafted, and how it was accepted and implemented. Finally, this paper will discuss how this type of work can be easily replicated in other similar organizations, including why this would be desirable.

An individual’s identified gender is often an important, even fundamental component of their identity. Failing to acknowledge and respect an individual’s identified gender can lead to frustration, distress, or alienation. Inclusivity stands as a crucial characteristic of San José State University (SJSU) and, consequently, SRJ. Moreover, gendered language poses a threat to SRJ’s goals and operations. Mistreating the gender identities of the editorial team, authors, or readers could disrupt journal production and present obstacles to SJR’s goals. While this paper focuses on the development of a gender-neutral language proposal for SRJ, it is worth considering how other organizations can adopt a similar policy and ensure the use of gender-neutral language.

Background

To inform this proposal, literature on the use of gender-neutral language was consulted and evaluated. It was important to see how other organizations approached the issue and how they attempted to ameliorate it. In the case of SRJ, three types of stakeholders were considered in developing this policy. The goal was to tailor the guidelines used by other organizations to the unique operations of SRJ.

Literature Overview

The use of gender-neutral language is not new and has been slowly adopted by many individuals and organizations over the years. There are many different interpretations or guidelines for the use of gender-neutral language that have been developed. The policy adopted by SRJ drew on existing guidelines from the United Nations (UN), the American Psychological Association (APA), and the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE).

While there is a lot of nuance to providing guidelines on gender-neutral language, there are some general principles that are universally accepted and suggested by various sources. Pronouns are discussed by the UN, APA, and NCTE. UN suggests avoiding gendered pronouns, but APA and NCTE more explicitly state that by default “they” should be used as a singular pronoun for individuals when their identified pronouns are unknown. This approach has gained a lot of traction in recent years and is included in guidelines provided by both the Associated Press’s (AP) guidelines (Easton, 2017) and the American Library Association’s (ALA) author guide (American Library Association, 2020). APA, NCTE, and ALA also suggest that if an identified pronoun is known then it should be used.
Another important guideline frequently presented is that expressions that enforce cultural expectations or stereotypes about gender should not be used. This is supported by the UN, APA, and NCTE. While the UN literature discusses avoiding expressions in a gender binary context, APA and NCTE extend this to a gender plural context and go further to suggest avoiding language that implies gender as a binary phenomenon. The UN also suggests that gender not be discussed unless it is relevant. The approach described in APA is perhaps more useful. They make the point that if gender or sex is discussed, the author needs to ensure they are defining either correctly, and they are addressing them appropriately by that definition.

**Stakeholders**

The three main stakeholders that were considered in designing this policy are the editors, authors, and readers. These individuals are worth considering because they play important roles in the production of the journal and because the journal is intended to provide them with learning and development opportunities. The deleterious effect of gendered language could be disruptive to both. It is important to understand all these stakeholders in the context of how they interact with SRJ.

**Editorial Team**

The editorial team is a diverse group of students that have chosen to contribute to the journal and learn more about publishing and the LIS field. SJSU’s iSchool includes students from across the US (and other countries), this means that editors that join SRJ come from diverse backgrounds and experiences. Due to the limited time to serve as an editor, it is common to have a lot of yearly turnover. This means that members need to adjust to new editors, and they need to cooperate in a short time frame. The use of gender-neutral language among the team cannot guarantee that the team will get along or cooperate, however, it can eliminate a potential source of frustration and exclusion.

**Authors**

SRJ relies on the volunteered writing and time of authors. Yes, authors are asking SRJ to publish their work, but it is important to remember that if authors do not want to offer their work or engage in the peer-review process, then SRJ has nothing to publish. Every member of the editorial team has either direct or indirect contact with the author. The editor-in-chief (EIC) communicates directly through emails. The managing editor (ME) communicates with the author through their remarks on the Consolidated Referee Report (CRR). The editorial team also communicates indirectly with the author through their remarks on their rubrics which are given to the author in the CRR. All of these are ways in which gendered language can affect an author’s continued participation in the peer-review process. Moreover, it is a major goal of SRJ to provide students with exposure to publishing and peer review. Once again, gendered language could serve as a barrier to this goal by dissuading authors from participating in peer-review.

**Readers**
SRJ is a journal and exists to serve its readers. Since May 2022, 20,503 SRJ articles have been downloaded in 156 countries (BePress retrieved 5/24/23). Just like the students of SJSU who comprise the editorial team, the readership of SRJ is diverse. The treatment of gender in the content of what is written in SRJ (whether it be improper pronouns or inappropriate expressions) could upset or alienate readers. Furthermore, as previously stated, the APA publication manual outlines the use of gender-neutral language. This is important because the SRJ format and content page (https://scholarworks.sjsu.edu/ischoolsrj/styleguide.html) asks authors to adhere to the APA guidelines. The ALA author guide also suggests the use of “they” as a gender-neutral pronoun (ALA, 2020). As a journal that discusses library and information science topics, adherence to gender-neutral language, as outlined by the ALA, helps guarantee that the writing meets the expectation of its readers.

Goals

The policy and proposal were drafted during the summer of 2022 in collaboration with the editor-in-chief, Amber Passey. It was then sent to the editorial team for review at the beginning of the Fall semester in August and voted on in the first editorial team meeting the same month. It was unanimously accepted. The proposal contained several things including a policy to be placed on the policy page of the SRJ’s website (https://scholarworks.sjsu.edu/ischoolsrj/policies.html), a change to the EIC and ME training, and a change to the editor’s rubrics. Before going over these changes, it is worth discussing the specific goals that they were designed to produce.

As previously stated, the goal of this proposal was to ensure that gendered language did not disrupt the three main stakeholders. Specifically, the proposal was planned to address three types of communication that occur among the stakeholders: between the editorial team, between editors and authors, and in published work.

Communication Among Editors

The governing rule for gender-neutral communication among the editorial team is that editors use their colleagues' identified pronouns if they are known. SJSU student profiles on Canvas allow them to select identified pronouns. By accessing the “People” tab of SRJ on Canvas, editors can see the names and identified pronouns of their fellow editors. They should use this to acquaint themselves with their peers' identified pronouns and use them. If an identified pronoun is not known then “they/theirs” can be used, however, it would be best to simply use the person’s name. In meetings at the beginning of the semester or when new editors join and there are introductions, leadership roles (editor-in-chief and managing editor) should provide their identified pronouns in their own introductions to encourage others to do so as well. This will hopefully encourage fellow editors to share identified pronouns without putting everyone on the spot by asking them to identify in front of the group (many of whom they may not know).

Communication with Authors
Editorial team members should use the pronouns “they/theirs” or say “the author” or “the reviewer” (in the case of book reviews) when talking about the manuscript or the author of the work being reviewed. By the nature of the double-blind, peer-review process, the author is unknown to all editorial team members except for the EIC and ME. Their pronouns or name will not be known to content and copy editors. While the copy and content editors may not directly communicate with the author, their remarks on the rubric are read by the author, so the language in rubrics must be gender-neutral. The author’s name is known to both the EIC and ME, but they will likely not know the identified pronouns of the author. While the third-person pronouns “they/theirs” or saying “the author/the reviewer” is appropriate for the ME because their communication is more indirect, second-person pronouns, “you/yours” work as well. In particular, the EIC should use “you/yours” because they communicate directly with the author through email.

**Language in Published Content**

Chapter five section five of the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association* (2010) should be consulted and used to edit manuscripts and ensure that published manuscripts use gender-neutral language. It was suggested that the language and grammar section of the rubric for copy editors and the voice section of the content editors’ rubric include gender-neutral language as specified by APA (2010). They should ensure the usage of appropriate pronouns or “they/theirs” in lieu of known identified pronouns. In particular, editors should suggest changing pronouns used by the author to describe someone to “they/theirs” if they cannot verify identified pronouns. They should also ensure that writing does not contain gendered expressions or implied binary genders. They should check that “sex” and “gender” are used appropriately based on their definition. Finally, they should ensure that appropriate terms pertaining to sex, gender, and gender identity are used.

**Proposal**

The proposal addressed the three contexts where gender-neutral language needs to be implemented. In total, this proposal included a policy statement for SRJ, amendments to the copy editor rubrics, and new content in the EIC and ME training material on Canvas.

**Policy**

The policy itself was drafted to state the goal of ensuring gender-neutral language. It was added to the SRJ policies page which serves more than a cosmetic purpose. This page contains important information for submitting authors and, in theory, should encourage them to adopt gender-neutral language in their manuscripts. It is also a page that new editors must view as part of their training and could prevent the use of gendered language between editors. The policy is as follows:

SRJ requires the use of gender-neutral language for communication among the editorial team, between the editorial team and submitting authors, and in its publications. Editorial team members should use the identified pronouns, the names, or the pronouns “they/theirs” when communicating
with their colleagues. In CRRs and rubrics, editorial team members should use the pronouns “they/their,” or say “the author” or “the reviewer” (for book reviews) when discussing the author or their work. The content of manuscripts should be reviewed against the APA’s publication manual (2010) guidelines for gender-neutral language discussed in chapter five, section five.

Rubrics

The rubrics used by copy editors have been amended to specify that editors review manuscripts for gender-neutral language. The copy-editor rubric currently asks readers to consider APA’s guidelines on bias in the language and grammar section, but this has been elaborated further to specify checking against section 5.5 (American Psychological Association, 2010, 138). An example of the amended rubric can be viewed here.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criteria Description</th>
<th>Rating 1-5</th>
<th>Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>References</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reference list includes a minimum of 10 scholarly sources (check Ulrichs for periodicals). DOIs, URLs and URIs are verifiable.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><a href="https://appliedscience.com/SimpleTextQuery">https://appliedscience.com/SimpleTextQuery</a> and doi.org are good resources for locating hyperlinked DOIs.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language &amp; Grammar</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Correct grammar, punctuation, and spelling, reflecting advanced scholarly competency. Diction is formal, precise, and economic. Terminology is relevant to the field. Applies writing conventions as per APA (e.g., avoiding bias, linguistic devices) and uses gender-neutral language (APA 5.5). Manuscript is edited to scholarly standard before submission</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Execution</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Author employs a consistent, scholarly voice throughout. Statements are clear. Paragraphs are well-structured and sentences provide logical flow. Direct quotations are used sparingly, and author’s writing is at the 6-wavefront</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

EIC/ME Training

To promote the use of gender-neutral language among the editorial team, a statement was added suggesting the EIC and ME introduce themselves and their identified pronouns. This is done at the first meeting of each semester or when there are introductions resulting from a new member of the editorial staff. This encourages other members of the editorial team to share their identified pronouns and use the identified pronouns of others. This also prevents anyone from being made uncomfortable by being directly asked to share.

Adoption and Use Elsewhere
This proposal was intended to ensure that SRJ continues to serve its stakeholders without disruption or conflict arising out of gendered language. It was important to provide a proposal that was actionable and took tangible steps to prevent gendered language rather than just a statement saying that gendered language is undesirable. The creation and adoption of this policy and other items in the proposal were the product of evaluating existing policies, and expectations in the field, and analyzing risks within the context of SRJ operations.

The process and steps taken by SRJ could be easily replicated elsewhere. In the case of SRJ, this started as an assessment of risks posed by gendered language. By looking at the stakeholders and how they communicate it was clear that due to their lack of knowing each other, there was room for miscommunication and gendered language to disrupt operations. Next, a review of the literature on the subject laid out a clear set of goals for communication between the stakeholders. Finally, the proposal was developed around knowing the goals and looking at how they could be achieved based on how stakeholders interacted in the editorial process. While it required some research and consideration of SRJ operations, it was not a challenging process to create a proposal. For the cost of a relatively small amount of work, the benefit is that there are much lower risks of gendered language disrupting our editors’ work or alienating authors and readers. A similar policy and proposal would need to be adapted to the nuances of a different organization but would probably not be much more challenging. The payoff is a more inclusive organization with a lower risk of conflict resulting from the mistreatment of gender identity.

References


https://ncte.org/statement/genderfairuseoflang/

https://www.apstylebook.com/blog_posts/7

