

INCITS INCLUSIVE TERMINOLOGY GUIDELINES

Bryce Adelstein Lelbach

 @blelbach

 **NVIDIA.** HPC Programming Models Architect

Standard C++ Library Evolution Chair, US Programming Languages Chair

Principle of Inclusive Terminology

Says what to do.

Use inclusive terms in new documents.

Try to replace terms with negative connotations in existing documents.

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Inclusive Terminology Guidelines

Suggests how to do it.

Describes the kind of terms that should be avoided.

Explains how to determine if a term is acceptable.

Explains how to replace terms in existing documents.

Provides examples of terms to avoid and suggested alternatives.

denotation, denotative

intended or primary meaning of a term

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connotation, connotative

meanings, ideas, feelings, imagery, emotions, or images inferred or invoked by a term in addition to the primary meaning of a term

term with negative connotations

term that infers or invokes negative feelings, negative imagery, negative emotions, negative image, lack of belonging, or falsity

Identifying Terms with Negative Connotations

What denotative meaning do I intend for this term?

What possible connotations could that term have?

Could those connotations be negative to some audiences?

black

Denotative Meaning:

1. The darkest color.
2. An ethnic group and culture of African ancestry (must be capitalized).

Negative Contexts:

Use to denote either:

1. Badness, evil, or immorality.
2. Rejection, lack of permission, or lack of authorization.

Negative Connotation:
Racial discrimination.

The text on the warning sign shall be **black**.



The ethnicity field shall have the following options: **Black**, ...

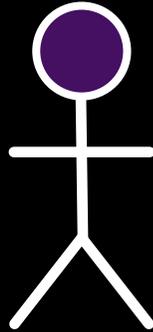


The IP address shall be added to the **blacklist**.

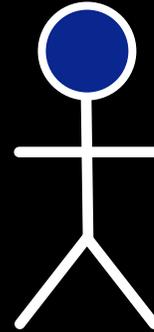


Offense Doesn't Require Bad Intent

Term X is offensive to my community.



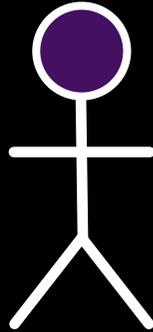
We didn't intend to be offensive, so it's fine.



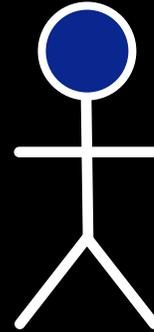
*It doesn't matter what the intent was;
what matters is whether offense was caused.*

Offense Is Subjective

Term X is offensive to
my community.



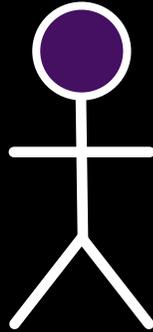
I don't think it's
offensive.



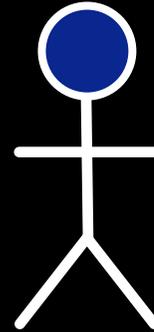
*Terms may have different meanings to different people
based on their experiences and identities.*

Offense Is Subjective

Term X is offensive to my community.



I don't think it's offensive.



A term is offensive if an audience experiences negative connotations; offense is subjective, not objective.

Figurative Language: Linguistic style that goes beyond the literal meaning of words (metaphors, similes, allusion, etc).

Recommendation: *Use cautiously; connotations are inherently present.*

Anthropomorphic Language: Linguistic style that attributes human characteristics or behaviors to non-human things.

Recommendation: *Avoid.*

Identity-First Language: Linguistic style that describes people in terms of their attributes or conditions.

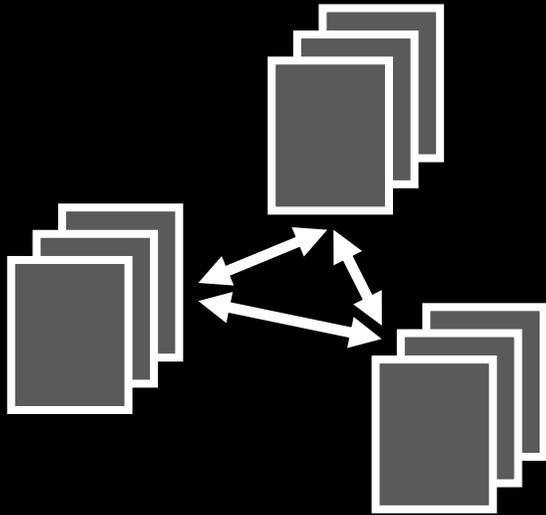
People-First Language: Linguistic style that avoids describing people in terms of their attributes or conditions.

Recommendation: *Identify and respect the preferences of the specific communities or cultures being referenced.*

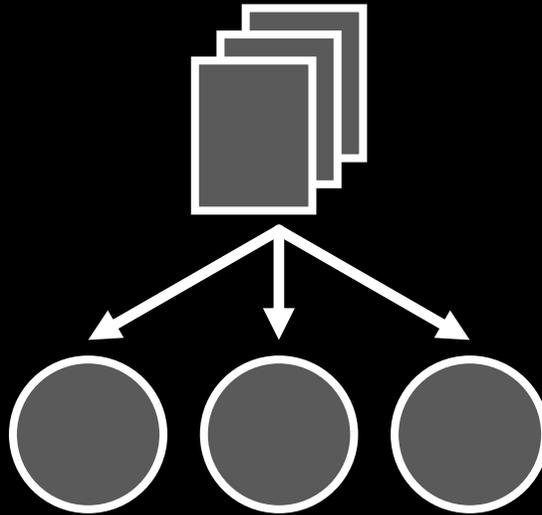
Gendered Language: Linguistic style that associates a particular gender with people or things.

Recommendation: *Avoid referring to people or things without a specific gender, especially if they are non-specific or abstract.*

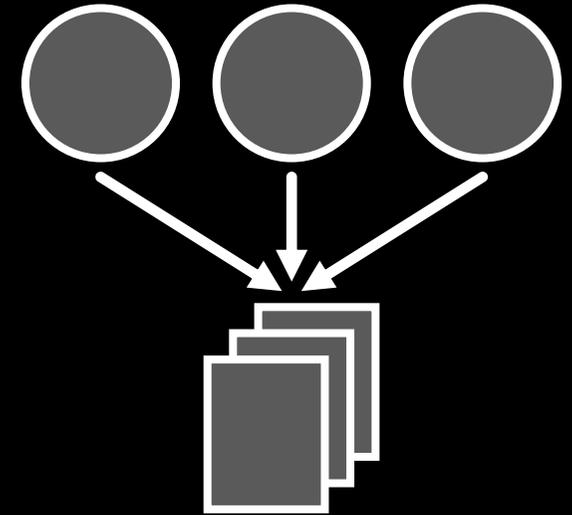
Migration From Existing Terms



Terms may be used in multiple standards.



Changing terms may impact users and vendors.



Terms may originate from outside the standard.

Migration From Existing Terms

Replacement won't necessarily happen overnight.

Not all terms with negative connotations can be replaced.

Consider introducing aliases to minimize usage of terms without breaking compatibility.

Often restructuring text works better than searching for a direct replacement for a term.

Annex A: Examples of Terms with Negative Connotations

A.1 Race	A.2 Accessibility	A.3 Gender and Sexuality	A.4 Dominance	A.5 Violence and Bereavement
white	disabled	he/him/his, she/her/hers	master	suicide
black	impaired	man, woman	slave	murder
dark pattern	blind	male	master/slave	kill
grandfather clause	deaf	female	colony	abort
first-class	dumb	mate		terminate
Chinese wall	dummy	mother tongue		hung, hang
	sanity			
	crazy			
	cripple			
	handicap			

Listing a term in Annex A doesn't mean it shouldn't ever be used; it just means there are contexts in which it has negative connotations.

The intent of this document is to reflect INCITS' understanding at the time of publication of the best practices for inclusive terminology and the preferences of different communities and stakeholders.

This is an evolving field, and as such, this is intended to be a living document. Feedback or suggested improvements to this document are welcome.