Negotiating Indigeneity: Fostering Indigenous Knowledge within LIS Curricula

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Abstract:

As indigenous women and graduate students, we have negotiated academic spaces, bore witness to, and experienced the ways in which colonial pedagogy operates within academia. By drawing from our Māori, Metis, and Kalinago traditional knowledges; and examining our roles and experiences as information professionals, indigenous library and information science (LIS) students, and beneficiaries of LIS diversity initiatives, we explore how indigenous systems of knowledge have been incorporated into the LIS curriculum.

Our research critically evaluates five institutions offering ALA-accredited LIS degrees across the United States, Canada, and Aotearoa; and the presence of indigenous knowledge made available to graduate LIS students through curricula, course offerings, experiential learning, and general resources. We also offer our recommendations for further action and research in this field. Ultimately, we seek to reaffirm the complexity and validity of indigenous knowledge within Western academia; and investigate how implementing experiential learning and critical pedagogy can result in a more inclusive environment for LIS practitioners and patrons.

Keywords: curriculum, educational pedagogy, experiential learning, indigenous systems of knowledge, library and information science

Introduction

Tēnā koutou, Tansi, Mabpwika,

As indigenous women, Library & Information Science (LIS) professionals, and graduate students, we have negotiated academic spaces, bore witness to, and experienced the ways in which colonial academic pedagogy operates in spaces of learning. As members of Kalinago, Metis, and Ngāti Paoa communities, our experiences are different, yet entail many similar barriers to learning as students in an American graduate program through an online mode of delivery. Both of us are first-generation scholars who have dealt with a number of challenges often found in contemporary indigenous communities, including poverty, racism, and alienation from our traditional lands and ways of being. These experiences have shaped and strengthened us, but have also presented obstacles in our journey to become information professionals.

Just as our communities are united by the waters that flow between them, we are united by our desire to see indigenous systems of knowledge more fully embedded into the LIS curriculum. We recognize that LIS students require more rigorous training to understand the issues, complexity and difference inherent to indigenous communities, in order to enable them to support indigenous communities throughout their careers; and that indigenous LIS students require a more inclusive curriculum grounded in indigenous ways of knowing. It has been our experience that we have had to actively seek out opportunities such as study abroad seminars, independent study projects, or serving on student and professional groups in order to incorporate indigenous knowledge into our learning. This adds to our ongoing efforts in overcoming imposter syndrome, and educating our peers in social justice concepts including microaggressions, privilege, allyship, and intersectionality. Overall, we wish to examine how we can reaffirm the complexity and validity of indigenous knowledge within Western educational practices; and how the LIS sphere can be a more inclusive environment for practitioners and patrons alike.

We offer here our findings on how five different universities have approached indigenous knowledge within the LIS curriculum, our recommendations, and possibilities for further research. We chose to examine Victoria University of Wellington (VUW) and The University of British Columbia (UBC) as these institutions offer Master of Information Studies/Master of Library & Information Studies (MIS/MLIS) qualifications in our homelands of Aotearoa and Canada. Including The Information School at the University of Washington (UW iSchool) allowed us to reflect on our own experiences as current Master of Library and Information Science (MLIS) students. The other two universities we researched, The University of Arizona (UoA), and The University of Wisconsin-Madison (UWM), offer differing methods of incorporating indigeneity into the curriculum through experiential learning, and specific efforts to recruit minoritized students.

We acknowledge the limitations of our project, and that indigeneity within LIS is an emerging field of study. A future research project would be beneficial to more deeply analyze enrollment in indigenous courses, census statistics for MLIS students and faculty, how these courses operate in practice, and course availability on a wider scale.

Program Philosophies

Victoria University of Wellington is the only institution in Aotearoa offering LIS qualifications at Masters or PhD level. VUW is committed to Māori research, and

encouraging students and faculty to use Te Reo Māori in their everyday lives. Library services include extensive Māori and Pasifika collections across all five campus libraries, the presence of a Māori Learning Advisor, and the ability to use the catalogue in Te Reo Māori. The Information Studies Programmes website states, "By the end of the programme, students are expected to…Have a basic understanding of Māori culture, the significance of the oral tradition, the role of whakapapa, and te reo." ("Overview of information studies programmes," 2010).

Matauranga Māori is incorporated into all courses, focusing on addressing the needs of Māori and Pasifika, and incorporating Māori methodologies into practice. Dr. Spencer Lilley, a Māori LIS scholar and senior lecturer at Massey University, states that these methodologies encourage understanding of the information sources Māori used before colonialism, such as whakairo (carvings) or waiata (sung poetry). (Lilley, 2012, pg. 72). However, the lack of Māori permanent faculty, compulsory courses, and deep student engagement suggests that there is much room for improvement. (Lilley & Paringatai, 2014, pg. 141).

LIANZA (Library and Information Association of New Zealand Aotearoa) is the professional organization for LIS workers and students in Aotearoa. LIANZA utilizes a Professional Registration scheme in order to set national standards within the LIS profession and recognize professional development. The scheme comprises eleven core Book of Knowledge elements, with the eleventh element – known informally as "BoK Eleven" requiring that professionals develop understanding of Māori processes and frameworks ("BoK 11," n.d.). Library practitioners that qualify for Professional Registration demonstrate their knowledge of and competency in Matauranga Māori, Māori methodologies, and kaitiakitanga. The complexity of indigenous knowledge has led to Matauranga Māori to be inherent in the other ten elements, as well as addressed in tertiary education. This reinforces that cultural competency should be an ongoing and conscious effort, and provides a model that other LIS institutions worldwide may consider adopting.

The University of British Columbia Information School is located in Vancouver, British Columbia, on the traditional territories of the Musqueam peoples. It is one of seven Canadian institutions that offer an MLIS; and additionally offers a Master of Archival Studies (MAS), a dual MLIS/MAS and a PhD in Library, Archival, and Information Studies. The MLIS includes a First Nations Curriculum Concentration (FNCC) specialization, which was designed specifically to prepare LIS professionals to work with indigenous communities, languages, and laws. ("FNCC," n.d.). The FNCC encourages students to take indigenous courses from outside the iSchool, to develop connections with indigenous scholars, and to cultivate cross-disciplinary approaches to indigenous epistemologies and ontologies. For those not pursuing the concentration, the program offers courses specifically focusing on indigenous knowledge, while the FNCC Coordinator can also support individual work. UBC is also home to the X̱wi7x̱wa Library, which utilizes an indigenous classification system and subject headings in organizing its collection, which highlights First Nations perspectives ("X̱wi7x̱wa Library," 2014).

Another LIS pioneer may be found in the Knowledge River program. Knowledge River was founded in 2001 as a program within the University of Arizona School of Information, and emphasizes perspectives of indigenous and Latino communities. Each year, a cohort of scholars are accepted into the Knowledge River program, receiving specialized advising, academic support, and a rich community experience. Scholars may also receive Graduate Assistantships, which offer financial aid and practical experience in a public, academic, medical, or special library setting ("Knowledge river," 2016).

The University of Washington Information School integrates indigenous systems of knowledge from a multidimensional approach, including experiential learning and research. While few indigenous courses are available, PhD candidates and members of the Indigenous Information Research Group (IIRG) at the iSchool have focused on indigeneity, including analyzing systems of knowledge, and indigenous knowledge formation and organization. Furthermore, the iSchool 2018 strategic plan states,

> "We will designate the UW iSchool as the first information school in the world that honors the treaties of its Indigenous population — treaties that clearly stipulate educational rights — by developing and implementing an information science program that studies and celebrates the intersection of information, technology, and Native communities" ("Indigenous Knowledge," 2016).

While it is commendable that the iSchool is prioritizing indigenous knowledge, we acknowledge that this vision makes a bold claim that may not be accomplished in the eighteen months remaining before 2018, particularly following the retirement of Dr. Cheryl Metoyer. We also acknowledge that our research indicates that other institutions have already made significant progress in honouring commitments to the indigenous communities whose original lands they occupy.

Course Analysis

In our research we have identified indigenous courses within the five LIS curricula we chose to examine. While it is not unusual for courses to have a diversity component, they rarely address indigeneity in depth. Indigenous courses contain course outcomes or content that focus on developing cultural competencies or providing services specifically to indigenous, migrant, multicultural, or diverse populations. These courses may also identify working with distinct materials, such as Winter counts, or treaty documents; or aim to prepare students for work in specific institutions such as tribal archives, museums, or government agencies. Indigenous courses may introduce concepts of archival or museology studies to preserve historical artifacts and display them in a way that accurately reflects their use. They may acknowledge contemporary needs such as building a diverse collection of literature, or address issues of social justice and information behaviour. Lastly, they may explicitly aim to embed indigenous systems of knowledge within academia; including oral traditions, navigation, language, and ceremony. At their core, such courses seek to incorporate indigenous epistemologies, which are rooted in relationality, community, and cultural practices.

We determined what courses had been offered at each university using a combination of publicly available curriculum information, and information generously offered or confirmed by program staff. It is notable that of the 23 courses we identified as pertaining to indigenous knowledge, only three were compulsory within their program, and many courses cannot be offered regularly without permanent indigenous faculty. For example, VUW's MIS contains the class, Māori Information Sources, which is offered biannually and taught on contract by Dr. Lilley. While we identified other pertinent courses such as Museums and Māori, and Partnerships and Networks, no MIS students have chosen to take these out-of-school courses. (K. Oxborrow, personal communication, May 9, 2016). While this was surprising to us, indigenous knowledge is still relatively new within the LIS field. The following table presents our findings.

Figure 1: Indigenous Courses Offered Within the LIS Curriculum

Institution	Country	Course	Status
The University of Arizona	USA	IRLS550 - Information Environments from Library and Hispanic and Native American Perspectives	Elective, Required for KR Cohort
		IRLS521 - Children's and Young Adult Literature in a Multicultural Society	Elective
		IRLS558 - Social Justice and Information Services	Elective
		IRLS557 - Documenting Diverse Cultures and Communities	Elective
		IRLS556 - Health Information in Ethnic-Cultural Communities & Environments	Elective
The University of British Columbia	Canada	LIBR522G – First Nations Literature and Other Materials for Children and Young Adults	Elective
NB: The First Nations Curriculum Concentration (FNCC) requires at least 12 credits of study with a significant amount of indigenous content. In addition to official UBC iSchool courses, the FNCC identified 102 courses within 29 departments which offer content that would fulfil this requirement during Winter 2015-16.		LIBR522J – Folklore and Storytelling	Elective
		LIBR553 - Understanding Information Users in Diverse Environments	Elective
		LIBR559A - Sociotechnical Perspectives of Information Systems	Elective
		LIBR569A – Information Practice and Protocol in Support of Indigenous Initiatives	Elective
		LIBR579J – Community-Led Libraries	Elective
Victoria University of Wellington	Aotearoa	INFO520 – The Information Professions	Required
		INFO523 – Information Access and Use	Required
		INFO530 – Māori Information Sources	Elective, offered biannually
		MHST515 – Museums and Māori	Out-of-school Elective
		MAOR408 – Te Māori Rangahau/Methodology of Māori Research	Out-of-school Elective
		MSSL505 – Partnerships and Networks	Out-of-school Elective
The University of Washington	USA	LIS534 – Indigenous Systems of Knowledge	Elective
		LIS564 – Multicultural Resources for Youth	Elective
		INFX583 – Cross-cultural Approaches to Leadership	Elective
		iSchool French Polynesia: Wayfinding and Different Ways of Knowing	Elective, Study Abroad Seminar
		iSchool Guam: Oral Traditions, Knowledge, & Science	Elective, Study Abroad Seminar
The University of Wisconsin-Madison	USA	LIS640 - Tribal Libraries, Archives, and Museums	Elective

Experiential Learning

While the array of courses available may initially be impressive, it is important to consider how these courses are delivered, and how their outcomes for learning are assessed and retained. For example, the ability to study through an asynchronous online mode (as with the UW iSchool or VUW) allows for the inclusion of students who may not otherwise be able to commit to a regular classroom schedule. However, rather than using technology to create a vibrant and interactive learning experience, it has been used to replicate the traditional Western classroom setting, consisting of readings, lectures, and mandatory "class discussion" which may not promote student engagement. Online learning comes at the significant cost of fostering community, including lack of access to student groups, networking opportunities, and potential mentors or references. Our experiences were confirmed during personal correspondence with Dr. Lilley, who spoke of the difficulty of ensuring that ethics of care were met in an online setting; for example, being unable to welcome a student back into the group after a tangihanga, or the lack of ability to visit marae or sacred spaces as a class. It can be said that online learning is counter-intuitive to an indigenous point of view and results in cohorts that lack connectedness in their academic journey. (S. Lilley, personal communication, May 3, 2016).

A more successful attempt at experiential learning may be found in the Study Abroad Exploration Seminars offered by the UW iSchool. This year, two in-depth trips focus specifically on indigenous knowledge in Guam and Tahiti. These seminars facilitate learning using a multidisciplinary approach, encouraging students to move beyond colonial pedagogy, to instead build community and bear witness to direct expressions of knowledge through cultural practices.

Since 2010, the University of Wisconsin-Madison has utilized experiential learning and community building to integrate indigenous knowledge into its LIS curriculum through the Tribal Libraries, Archives, and Museums (TLAM) Project. A vital component of the TLAM Project is attendance of Convening Culture Keepers gatherings, which provide networking and professional development opportunities for students, tribal leaders, archivists, and curators serving indigenous communities within Wisconsin. By fostering community partnerships, the TLAM Project supports students in project based initiatives related to archives, information organization, digitization, and library funding campaigns. Course objectives state that participants will, "recognize the legal, social, cultural, political, and economic issues affecting participation of Indian tribes in the knowledge society" ("LIS 640," 2016). The ability for students to ground their work in community knowledge, protocols, and participatory research will deeply impact the ways in which they approach their future work.

Recruitment of Students and Faculty

Librarianship is a largely homogenous profession, with the ALA Diversity Counts tables for 2012 illustrating that 88% of credentialed librarians are white (Bourg, 2014, Lack of Diversity by the numbers in librarianship and in book stuff, para.1). To address this disparity, it is largely agreed upon that we need to recruit and retain LIS professionals from underserved groups. While recruitment and diversity initiatives exist, these largely serve to introduce diverse candidates to the LIS profession, rather than create space within the LIS profession for alternative frameworks or ways of knowing and teaching. What follows is a table containing data from the 2010 US Census, the 2012 ALA Diversity Counts, and University of Washington iSchool MLIS admissions for 2014 and 2015.

Figure 2: Census Data within the LIS Profession

	African-American	Native American	Asian	Caucasian	Hawaiian/ Pacific-Islander	Hispanic/Latino	Other
US Census Data 2010	15%	1.2%	5.3%	63%	5.3%	17%	2.4%
ALA Diversity Counts 2012	5%	<1%	3%	88%	3%	3%	<1%
UW iSchool 2014 Cohort	3%	2%	6%	74%	1%	13%	2%
UW iSchool 2015 Cohort	3%	1%	11%	76%	<1%	9%	1%

NB: ALA Diversity Counts record Asian and Hawaiian/Pacific-Islander respondents in a single category; UW iSchool admissions data count these as two separate categories.

The UW iSchool has several indigenous scholars serving as adjunct/affiliate faculty, particularly through the IIRG ("IIRG," 2014). As part of its iSchool 2018 vision, UW has begun recruitment for two Assistant Professors in Native North American Indigenous Knowledge, with the intention of raising the level of discourse at the intersection of indigeneity and information technology. We are hopeful that these new positions will manifest as continued research, new and challenging course offerings and further indigenous programming and scholarship.

We were unable to obtain enrolment figures for UBC, however, Assistant Professor and Coordinator for the FNCC, Dr. Lisa Nathan states that the iSchool is focusing on "culture change within the school with the belief that it will lead to better, more holistic and sustaining environment for Indigenous students (and faculty)" (L. Nathan, personal communication, April 21, 2016). While we could not identify any indigenous scholars among the iSchool's regular faculty, the 2015-2016 Dodson Visiting Professor was Dr. Lilley, who taught in addition to giving a public lecture and producing research.

Intake for VUW's MLIS program is about 70 students per year; and since 1995, the number of Māori students who have graduated from programmes within the School of Information Management is around 6%. The school currently has no Māori faculty other than Dr. Lilley's role as biannual guest faculty. (K. Oxborrow, personal communication, April, 20 2016).

UoA's Knowledge River program has resulted in over 180 graduates of the program, including 60 graduates of Native American descent. There are currently no indigenous faculty within Knowledge River (G. Macaluso, personal communication, May 17 2016).

Recommendations

In reflecting on our findings, we find ourselves presented with the challenge of upholding critical pedagogy and access while remaining accountable to the standards of the current colonial academic system. McIvor states, "Indigenous scholars carry what is often called a

dual responsibility. We are responsible to a scholarly community as well as to our own and other Indigenous communities to which we may be a part" (McIvor, 2010, p.141). In moving towards indigenizing the LIS curriculum, we must operate within a framework of connectedness, critical thinking, and a commitment to challenge the status quo. As Linda Tuhiwai Smith notes, "Decolonization, however, does not mean and has not meant a total rejection of all theory or research or Western knowledge." (Smith, 2012, p.89). In tandem, Gaudry and Hancock urge decolonization through a combination of direct experience and scholarly criticism (Gaudry & Hancock, 2012). We must put our information needs as indigenous communities at the forefront of our efforts as we work to create paradigm shifts within LIS institutions.

In considering how to best advance indigeneity within LIS environments, we must be clear in our short-term and long-term goals, and how we enlist support from and create community among our non-indigenous allies. Duarte and Belarde-Lewis' outline the process of, "[i]magining [which] consists of creating figurative and literal spaces for the work of building, analyzing, and experimenting with Indigenous knowledge organization" (Durate & Belarde-Lewis, 2015, p.687). In bridging our roles as members of indigenous and LIS communities, we have opportunities to build relationships that transcend state legitimization through reconciliation, decolonization, and imagining.

The institutions we examined have begun this process of imagining, and have acknowledged the value of indigenous knowledge within the LIS profession. While institutional needs differ according to the indigenous communities they serve, or the traditional territories upon which they are located, we found that these institutions constructed courses that were able to empower and connect both indigenous and non-indigenous students. A strength of these programs is their emphasis on collaboration between students, faculty, and supporting institutions. In addition to reinforcing indigenous values of respect and sharing, these experiential learning components connect students to a multi-dimensional understanding of indigeneity and the current cultural climate.

We have observed that, "We must be cautious that 'Indigenous' does not come to signify engagement with 'the other' without an actual shift in disciplinary ontologies and epistemologies." (Hunt, 2013, p.5). We have several recommendations which reflect our thoughts on how to realistically begin sustainable work to decolonize LIS environments.

> **1. Admissions Criteria:**
> We evaluated admissions criteria for 59 institutions across North America that offer ALA-accredited MLIS programs, as well as VUW. Of those 60 institutions, only 23 would consider applicants such as ourselves, who hold an undergraduate GPA of under 3.0. Many institutions require additional testing, additional undergraduate and graduate courses to be taken before applying, and offer only probationary acceptance if successful. Considering the additional barriers of relocating for residential programs, this is a particularly challenging route to LIS accreditation. Ten institutions will consider applicants with an undergraduate GPA of under 3.0, which also offer an online mode of delivery.
>
> These barriers mirror the preference for written bodies of knowledge over lived experience and non-literary knowledge. We encourage institutions to prioritize diversification of their cohorts, and acknowledge other demonstrations of preparedness for study, such as substantial work experience in education, outreach, or LIS environments.

2. Validation of Indigenous Knowledge:
Make indigenous knowledge a required component of LIS programs. Rather than a broad exploration of all indigenous knowledge, offer multiple, in-depth courses that complement each other, and include advanced curricula that are specific to local communities. Review how this knowledge is assessed, retained, and carried forward into the profession.

3. Experiential Learning:
Create opportunities to implement knowledge as practice through independent study, field work, or service learning; either as credited coursework or volunteer work. This builds community, upholds non-literary knowledge, and ensures that protocol and knowledge are retained. Utilize experiential and interactive learning to incorporate protocol and community into online learning.

4. Relationship to Land:
Ensure LIS professionals understand the relationship between indigenous communities and their traditional territories. Support building authentic relationships with indigenous communities, including creating community relationship protocols, and applying needs-assessment strategies while maintaining cultural competency.

5. Academic Support:
During our MLIS careers, we have been the grateful beneficiaries of mentorship, internship placements, and financial support from the ALA Spectrum Scholarship Program, ARL Initiative to Recruit a Diverse Workforce, and the ARL Career Enhancement Program. The relationships we have grown within these environments have been the greatest fuel and empowerment to our work; and these networks will both support us and give us an opportunity to be of service as our careers progress.

It is unfortunate that diversity initiatives and indigenous scholars are often in direct competition for limited funding and placement opportunities; and that programs such as the ARL CEP (ARL CEP, 2016) and San Jose State University's Circle of Learning (SJSU School of Information, 2015) have been discontinued due to lack of funding. It is vital that such programs continue to combat the history of homogeneity within LIS, as well as critique their intentions regarding the inclusion of underserved groups under colonial pedagogy.

6. Faculty Hiring Practices:
The history of not hiring PhD graduates as faculty within their home institutions is counter-intuitive to indigenous practices of relationship building; and erodes knowledge, commitment, and connectivity within academia. Create tenure-track faculty positions that support diversity and cultural competency; and include more classes that have embedded indigenous ways of knowing.

7. Allyship:
Consider how LIS professionals can aid indigenous communities in upholding their sovereignty, including assisting with genealogy and research regarding treaty claims. Consider how hiring minoritized staff, removing barriers to access, inclusivity through use of indigenous languages, and adopting a collaborative approach to programming and collection development can foster community and

lifelong learning. Lastly, consider collaborative efforts such as repatriation of artifacts to their original communities, allowing institutions to keep a digital copy.

8. Further Research:
There is much potential to grow indigenous knowledge within the LIS profession, and to support the future of indigenous librarianship. Future studies may include in-depth analysis of courses offered nationally, including interviews with students, faculty, and community stakeholders; research in the information needs of specific indigenous communities; and the development of tools to equip non-indigenous LIS professionals in outreach and allyship. Additionally, there is a need for tools to empower indigenous LIS professionals, including support during the academic and recruitment process, fulfilling community obligations, and navigating power dynamics in the workplace.

Conclusion

We hope that this preliminary research has provided a platform which will encourage further discussion, research, and collaboration at the intersection of indigeneity and library and information science. By cultivating a strong network of indigenous LIS faculty, and weaving indigeneity into the LIS curriculum as a requirement of ALA-accreditation, we trust that the work of creating spaces that value indigenous knowledge will not weigh so heavily upon future students and professionals. We must attempt to strengthen our relationship with the academy through reconciliation, decolonizing and imagining. In collaborating with indigenous communities to use diverse information systems, we challenge the boundaries of current library and information perspectives, policies, and procedures. Just as the waters that unite us continue to ebb and flow, we must continue to make our voices heard, keep community in our hearts, and our collective responsibility in our minds, that we all may thrive.

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