

Retrieving Oregon Indians from Obscurity: A Project to Enhance Access to Resources on Tribal History and Culture

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Abstract:

The paper reports on a project at Oregon State University to ensure that all Oregon Indian tribes are represented in the Library of Congress Subject Headings (LCSH). After providing some general background about how Indian tribes are treated in LCSH, some of the problems with constructing subject headings for tribes is discussed. A list of all Oregon Indian tribes was created and compared with a list of subject headings for those tribes in order to determine which ones were missing. WorldCat was searched for information resources about the Indian tribes to ascertain if there was literary warrant to create subject heading proposals for them. Of the fifty-four Oregon Indian tribes, eleven (20%) should have subject headings established. Forty-one bibliographic records about these tribes were examined to see what subject headings had been applied and whether they had been applied correctly. Future work resulting from this project, including the creation of subject heading proposals and the correction of bibliographic records, is discussed, including the suggestion that these methods be applied to Indian tribes in other states.

Keywords: Library of Congress Subject Headings, Indian tribes, Oregon, subject analysis.

Oregon State University (OSU) has made a commitment to multiculturalism and serving a diverse campus population in many different ways. Its Office of Equal Opportunity and Inclusion ensures that the campus environment is equitable for all students and staff, regardless of their racial, religious, or ethnic identity. The Diversity and Cultural Engagement Office sponsors several cultural centers to serve African American, Asian, Middle Eastern and Native American students through cultural events as well as personal and academic counseling. Encouraging students to understand their own identity and that of others on campus is a critical part of the formal and informal curriculum at OSU.

The OSU Libraries and Press (OSULP) is also committed to these same endeavors. OSULP employs a full-time librarian to oversee the development of its Oregon Multicultural and OSU Queer Archives. Indeed, the current strategic plan states explicitly the core value that “we recognize, promote, and value the differences within our organization and community.”

(1)

To that end, OSULP's Cataloging and Metadata Services Unit has begun a project to ensure that subject access to information about Oregon Indian tribes is accessible through our catalog and catalogs of other libraries. The project does this by confirming that subject headings exist for all of Oregon's Indian tribes, creating subject headings where none exist and adding or correcting subject headings that have been applied in the past to resources about those tribes. This paper reports on the initial steps taken in this ongoing project which will enhance access to resources which detail the identity, history, and culture of Oregon's indigenous peoples.

Background

The *Library of Congress Subject Headings (LCSH)* refers to all indigenous peoples of the Americas as "Indians." This subject heading is divided into five broad subject headings: "Indians of North America," "Indians of Mexico," "Indians of Central America," "Indians of South America," and "Indians of the West Indies." Most of the Indian tribes of North America are narrower terms under "Indian tribes of North America – [state or province]."

It is beyond the scope of this paper to discuss the usage of the term "Indians" to describe the indigenous peoples of the Americas. Many indigenous people in the United States do refer to themselves as Indians, although there are also many who prefer the term "Native Americans." Since the United States government and *LCSH* uses "Indians," this paper will use that terminology as well.

There are well over 500 Indian tribes in the United States, however it can be difficult to identify exactly what constitutes a tribe. As an example, consider the Siletz Indians whose reservation is an hour's drive from the OSU campus. The subject heading in *LCSH* for this ethnic group is "Siletz Indians." A search for this subject heading in OCLC's WorldCat database retrieves 249 records (as of March 2, 2017). Indian tribes recognized by the United States government are established as geographic jurisdictions in the Library of Congress' Name Authority File. The established name for the Siletz Indians as a sovereign nation would appear to be "Confederated Tribes of the Siletz Reservation, Oregon," which has cross references of "Siletz Tribe" as well as "Confederated Tribes of Siletz Indians." One can search this corporate body in WorldCat and retrieve 108 records. This established name, however, is not synonymous with the ethnic group. In fact, the Confederated Tribes of the Siletz Reservation includes members descended from seventeen different tribes, all of them having been removed from their homelands in the mid-nineteenth century and relocated to the reservation set aside for them. The reservation itself is established as a geographic name, "Siletz Indian Reservation (Or.)." A search in WorldCat on this geographic name as a subject heading retrieves 200 records. While there is overlap between these three sets of results, many of these bibliographic records contain only one subject heading. Identifying information resources associated with a particular tribe is complicated by this tripartite approach of searching ethnic group, formal organization, and geographic entities.

The concept of tribe is further complicated by two other factors, one orthographic and the other classificatory. The names of Indian tribes exist in literary sources in a wide variety of spellings, often attributed to non-native speakers misunderstanding indigenous languages. The name of a particular tribe may also vary depending on whether the source of information was a tribal member or not. Thus, the authority record for the ethnic group “Coquille Indians” includes “Coquille Indians,” “Miluk Indians,” “Mishikhwutmetunne Indians,” “Mulluk Indians,” and “Nasami Indians.” Note that names of tribes derived used by a neighboring tribe were often derogatory, although in some cases these derogatory terms have entered common English usage.

The difference between a tribe and a band has never been clearly established. Information resources on the Indians of Oregon’s Willamette Valley are referred to as the Kalapuya tribe and are often subdivided into bands defined by the watershed area in which each lived. These nine bands include the Ahantchuvuks, Atfalatis, Calapooyas, Chelamelas, Chepenefas, Luckiamutes, Santiams, Yamels, and Yoncallas. The bands living in the northern, central, and southern parts of the valley, however, spoke related but mutually unintelligible languages.(2) Such differences in language would warrant referring to each band as a separate tribe rather than lumping them together under a single term. In fact, in *LCSH*, the subject heading “Kalapuya Indians” has one narrower term, “Yoncalla Indians,” but also has the cross-references “Santiam Indians” and “Lukamiute Indians.” The confusion in the thesaurus reflects a general confusion in the naming of Indian groups.

The Project

In order to facilitate the discovery of resources on Oregon Indians, OSULP has undertaken a project to ensure that its holdings and the holdings of other libraries on topics relating to these tribes is fully accessible to users. The project has taken a two-pronged approach:

1. Establishing subject headings for all Indian tribes in Oregon not already represented in *LCSH*
2. Ensuring that bibliographic records in WorldCat and OSULP’s catalog for resources about those tribes are reviewed and updated with specific, appropriate subject headings for ethnic groups, reservations, or federally recognized names of tribes

This paper reports on the project so far and analyzes obstacles encountered.

Established Subject Headings

In order to ensure that all Indian tribes in Oregon are represented in *LCSH*, the first step was to compile a comprehensive list of such tribes, both historical and current, and compare that list to subject headings already present in *LCSH*.

In creating the list, the *Federal Register* (3) was consulted for the names of the federally recognized tribes currently living in Oregon. As explained above, each such recognized tribe may be composed of several historic tribes. To collect the names of specific tribes, the websites for the federally recognized tribes were examined since these sites often list the names of the component tribes. (4) Names of tribes were entered into a spreadsheet.

Reference works were also consulted to both double-check the spelling of tribal names and to ensure that none were missed. (5) Fifty-four tribes were identified in this manner. No claim is made that this list is comprehensive. Some names listed as tribes are considered subtribes or bands in some reference works.

A search was done in *LCSH* for “Indians of North America – Oregon” in order to provide a list of all Oregon tribes for which subject headings had been established. In addition, any of the fifty-four tribes found when consulting reference works that were missing under “Indians of North America – Oregon” were also searched in *LCSH*. A total of thirty-six subject headings for Oregon Indian tribes were identified. Seven tribes without subject headings are considered bands of the Kalapuya Indians, for which a subject heading does exist.

| Tribes in References | Tribes in <i>LCSH</i> |
|-----------------------------|------------------------------|
| Ahantchuyuk Indians | |
| Alsea Indians | Alsea Indians |
| Atfalati Indians | |
| Bannock Indians | Bannock Indians |
| Cathlamet Indians | |
| Cayuse Indians | Cayuse Indians |
| Chastacosta Indians | Chastacosta Indians |
| Chelamela Indians | |
| Chepenefa Indians | |
| Chetco Indians | Chetco Indians |
| Chilluckittequaw Indians | |
| Chinook Indians | Chinook Indians |
| Clackamas Indians | Clackamas Indians |
| Clatskanie Indians | |
| Clatsop Indians | |
| Clowwewalla Indians | |
| Coos Indians | Coos Indians |
| Coquille Indians | Coquille Indians |
| Galice/Applegate | |
| Kalapuya Indians | Kalapuya Indians |
| Klamath Indians | Klamath Indians |
| Klickitat Indians | Klickitat Indians |
| Kuitsh Indians | Kuitsh Indians |
| Kwalthioqua Indians | |
| Latgawa Indians | |
| Luckiamute Indians | |
| Modoc Indians | Modoc Indians |
| Molala Indians | Molala Indians |
| Multnomah Indians | Multnomah Indians |
| Nehalem Indians | Nehalem Indians |
| Nez Perce Indians | Nez Perce Indians |

| | |
|-------------------------|-------------------------|
| Northern Paiute Indians | Northern Paiute Indians |
| Santiam Indians | |
| Shasta Indians | Shasta Indians |
| Shoshoni Indians | Shoshoni Indians |
| Siletz Indians | Siletz Indians |
| Siuslaw Indians | Siuslaw Indians |
| Skilloot Indians | |
| Takelma Indians | Takelma Indians |
| Tenino Indians | |
| Tillamook Indians | Tillamook Indians |
| Tolowa Indians | Tolowa Indians |
| Tututni Indians | Tututni Indians |
| Umatilla Indians | Umatilla Indians |
| Umpqua Indians | Umpqua Indians |
| Walla Walla Indians | Walla Walla Indians |
| Wanapum Indians | Wanapum Indians |
| Wasco Indians | Wasco Indians |
| Watlala Indians | |
| Wyam Indians | Wyam Indians |
| Yahuskin Indians | Yahuskin Indians |
| Yamel Indians | |
| Yaquina Indians | Yakonan Indians |
| Yoncalla Indians | Yoncalla Indians |

Including the seven Kalapuya “bands,” subject headings for eighteen tribes were not found in *LCSH*. Since literary warrant drives the creation of new subject headings in *LCSH*, a search for works about these missing tribes was undertaken using the following steps.

1. Using OCLC Connexion, a search was done for each of these eighteen tribal names and their synonyms and variant spellings as found in references. Searches were done for each term in the singular and the plural as either keyword searches or title searches. While keyword searching retrieved all instances of a word anywhere in a record, for some searches the number of retrieved records was prohibitively large. Often, the tribal name has been used as a geographic name, with resources about those geographic entities were irrelevant to this study. A title search retrieved fewer records, although the geographic names still had to be separated from records pertaining to the actual tribes.
2. Each relevant record was printed out.
3. For each record, the subject headings assigned to the record were examined.
 - a. If there were subject headings assigned from *LCSH*, notes were made if terms for ethnic groups were broad or incorrect (i.e., subject headings for other Indian tribes had been assigned).

- b. If there were no *LCSH* subject headings in the record, subject headings from other thesauri and key words were noted.

Results

Of the eighteen tribes, no bibliographic records were retrieved for resources about seven. For the remaining eleven tribes, forty-one bibliographic records were retrieved. Of these, five (12%) lacked any subject headings from *LCSH*, although some contained subject terms from other thesauri or keywords. Of the thirty-six with authorized subject headings, the following table displays the subject headings assigned. Note: Subject headings for terms other than the names of tribes were not recorded. Numbers in parentheses indicate the number of records using the subject heading. (6)

| Name of Tribe | Number of records | LCSH | Notes |
|---------------|-------------------|---|-------|
| Ahantchuyuk | 2 | Indians of North America – Mixed descent – Oregon – French Prairie – History – 19 th century.(2) Kalapuya Indians - Oregon – French Prairie – History – 19 th century.(2) | |
| Atfalati | 4 | Kalapuya Indians – Oregon – Biography. Kalapuya Indians – Oregon – Social life and customs. Kalapuya Indians – Oregon – History. Kalapuya language - Texts. Kalapuya Indians. (2) Indians of North America – Oregon. Indians of North America – Oregon – Pacific Coast. | |
| Clatsop | 3 | Chinookan Indians – Treaties. Chinook Indians – Social life and customs. Chinook Indians – History – 19 th century. Chinook women – Oregon – Biography. Indians of North America – Oregon. | |

| | | | |
|------------------|----|--|---|
| Galice/Applegate | 5 | Indians of North America – Oregon - Census. Indians of North America – Oregon – Discography. Indians of North America – Oregon – Languages. Athapaskan Indians – Discography. Coquille Indians – Discography. Tolowa Indians – Discography. Umpqua Indians – Discography. Indians of North America. Athapaskan Indians. | |
| Kathlamet | 3 | Chinook Indians – Census. Salish Indians – Census. Indians of North America – Census. Indians of North America – Oregon. Chinook Indians – Land tenure. Chinook Indians – Claims. Indians of North America – Land tenure – Oregon. Chinook Indians – Oregon – Claims. | |
| Latgawa | 2 | Indians of North America – Oregon. | |
| Santiam | 4 | Kalapuya language - Texts. Kalapuya Indians. (3) Indians of North America – Oregon. Indians of North America – Oregon – Pacific Coast. | |
| Skilloot | 1 | Chinookan Indians. | |
| Tenino | 18 | Indians of North America – Oregon. (7) Shahaptian Indians – Social life and customs. Indians of North America – Land tenure - Oregon. Indians of North America – Relocation – Oregon. Indians of North America – Columbia River Valley – Folklore. Walla Walla Indians – Treaties. Indians of North America – Oregon – Census. | Tenino Indians given as LCSH on 4 records, but not currently authorized. Also John Day Indians. |
| Watlala | 2 | Tillamook Indians – Juvenile fiction. Indians of North America – Northwest, Pacific – Juvenile fiction. Indians of North America – Northwest Coast of North America – Fiction. | |

Discussion

Nineteen (63%) of the bibliographic records examined included the subject heading “Indians of North America – Oregon,” often with subdivisions. While this subject heading would be appropriate for a work whose subject was all, most, or some of the many tribes in Oregon, it is not very specific when applied to a work that covers three or fewer tribes. In many cases, the cataloger likely did not find the more specific tribe as an authorized subject heading and applied the broader heading as a means of providing some kind of subject access to the work.

For thirteen of these nineteen records (68%), subject headings for specific tribes were assigned in addition to “Indians of North America – Oregon.” Perhaps for these records, the cataloger assigned “Indians of North America – Oregon” as a way of providing subject access to those tribes not represented by the more specific subject headings. While assigning an overly broad subject heading does provide a kind of subject access, it does not fulfill the criterion of subject specificity when doing subject analysis: Assign headings that are as specific as the topics they cover.(7) As part of this current project, the proposal of subject authority records for all eleven tribes is planned with the subsequent intention of revising the records being studied here.

Four bibliographic records include the subject heading “Kalapuya Indians,” sometimes with additional subdivisions. As mentioned earlier, this term has been applied to all of the bands that lived in the Willamette Valley, although they spoke mutually unintelligible languages and were geographically distinct from one another. All four records mention the Tualatin Indians (also known as the Atfalati Indians) and two mention the Santiam Indians as well. A subject authority record is being prepared for each of these bands. For the Santiam Indians, the cross reference currently present for them in the Kalapuya Indians authority record will need to be removed and the new subject heading made to be a narrower term. Specific subject headings make the identity of the bands distinctive and brings them out from the shadow of the catch-all “Kalapuya Indians.”

The confusion of bands and tribes is not only present in the bibliographic records, but also in the works themselves. The title *Jennie Michel: a woman of the Clatsop Tribe of the Chinook Nation* would naturally make the reader assume that the Clatsops are a band or subtribe of the Chinooks. Accordingly, the cataloger assigned the subject heading “Chinook women.” While the Clatsops once spoke a Chinookan language, most reference works treat them as a separate and distinct tribe.

Identifying Indian tribes by the language family that they speak was and is a way that anthropologists attempt to understand the multitude of tribes and bands. Consequently, there are subject headings for groups of Indians whose languages are related, such as Chinookan Indians, Lutuamian Indians, and Shahaptian Indians. Each of these terms appears in LCSH with six, two, and eight narrower terms for specific tribes. Consequently, a work on the treaty with the Clatsop Indians has the subject heading “Chinookan Indians – Treaties.” A researcher would have to know the linguistic classification of the Clatsops to discover this title. Another work, a discography of Chetco and Tututni music and texts, states in a note

that it includes all known recordings in the languages of the Chetco, Tututni, Chastacosta and Gallice-Applegate tribes. The bibliographic record has the overly broad subject heading “Indians of North America” and specific subject headings for the first three named tribes, but has an assortment of other subject headings presumably to cover the Gallice-Applegate tribe. These include:

- Athapascan Indians – Discography.
- Coquille Indians – Discography.
- Tolowa Indians – Discography.
- Umpqua Indians – Discography.

“Athapascan Indians” is a broader term subject heading for thirty-five tribes. The other headings refer to tribes in Southwestern Oregon. A subject heading for the Galice-Applegate tribes would allow these subject headings to be replaced with a more specific and appropriate term.

Conclusion

Library users looking for works on some Oregon Indian tribes are presently at a disadvantage because of the lack of subject headings for them. Catalogers have applied overly broad or incorrect subject headings. Well-constructed subject headings for these tribes, with appropriate cross-references, need to be added to *LCSH*.

While the current project at Oregon State University will result in the proposal of these subject headings and the correction or augmentation of the bibliographic records studied in this paper, an examination of existing bibliographic records for other Oregon Indian tribes is warranted to see if existing subject headings have been applied correctly.

The methods used here could also be applied to study the assignment of subject headings for Indian tribes in other states. If subject headings for tribes in other states have been created at the same rate as Oregon Indian tribes, then there may be many dozens of subject headings that need to be proposed.

The fruits of this project should result in better treatment of the Indian tribes of Oregon in our information systems and, perhaps, thereby bring them out of obscurity.

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