

Classification, Bias,  
and  
American Indian Materials

by  
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*Margins*

*So, we stand here.  
Where we have always been,  
Since Manifest Destiny,  
Put us on the margins.*

*Wondering if shouting out,  
Would lend itself,  
To improved hearing,  
At the center.*

*Maybe, bone awls,  
Applied just so,  
Would improve,  
The listening.*

*Perhaps it is distance itself,  
That causes our voices,  
To be lost,  
From the margins.*

*It seems we are invisible too,  
Out here in the distance,  
As we flicker at the margins,  
Of time.*

*John D. Berry, California, 2003<sup>1</sup>*

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## Introduction

"Librarians have a professional obligation to ensure that all library users have free and equal access to the entire range of library services, materials, and programs," according to the American Library Association (2002, ¶ 10). However, equal access to library materials is hindered by bias in subject cataloging, both in major classification schemes (Library of Congress Classification and Dewey Decimal Classification) and major controlled subject vocabularies (Library of Congress Subject Headings and Sears Subject Headings). These classification systems and subject headings reflect the Eurocentric, male, Christian orientations of their originators as well as the time period in which they were constructed. As a result, groups of peoples and ideas that do not fall within the "norm" represented by classification and subject standards are marginalized. In terms of library services, this marginalization negatively impacts the ability of users to successfully retrieve information on these topics. On a larger scale, biased classification systems and subject headings reinforce and perpetuate negative stereotypes in our society.

American Indians are one such group of people that is adversely affected by the inherent bias built into Western library classification systems. Both the Library of Congress Classification system (LCC) and the Dewey Decimal Classification system (DDC) marginalize American Indian materials by placing them in the past (in the history section) and separate from the whole of human knowledge. Both systems also exclude numerous Native concepts, lack specificity within Native topics, fail to organize Native material in ways conducive to retrieval, and at times use offensive or outdated terminology. Furthermore, the context into which these systems place Native materials

reveals a perceived lack of relevance, but more importantly, a lack of recognition of the sovereignty of American Indian nations. This results in hindering access to American Indian materials to all users, discouraging Native people from using libraries by reinforcing the image of the library as a non-Native institution, and reinforcing to the outside world the stereotypes that American Indians are part of the past and do not contribute relevant knowledge to contemporary society.

In this paper I will discuss library classification as it relates to American Indian materials. First, I will review the literature pertinent to bias in classification and subject access, with an emphasis on Native Americans. I will then compare Western concepts of classification with Native concepts of organization, and I will analyze the LCC and DDC in terms of how they handle Native materials. I will also discuss several Native classification schemes, including the Brian Deer (BDC) and Native American Educational Services (NAES) systems. Furthermore, I will discuss the ways in which three Native libraries have handled classification in their collections. Finally, I will suggest ways in which the Native American library community can cooperatively address this issue, so that all libraries, Indian and non-Indian, can provide better subject access to American Indian materials.

### Literature Review

There is an extensive body of literature regarding bias in subject access, both in subject headings and in classification systems. The bulk of materials written on this topic has been collected and analyzed by Hope A. Olson and Rose Schlegl (2001). Olson and

Schlegl list 93 articles and books about bias in subject access, including several literature reviews, on their research website (n.d). I will discuss a few of the more significant and illustrative examples of this literature, as well as those that mention American Indians specifically.

Sanford Berman brought the issue of bias in subject cataloging forward in the late 1960s and throughout the 1970s (1969, 1971, 1981). He pointed out numerous offensive subject headings (YELLOW PERIL, MAMMIES, JEWISH QUESTION) and worked tirelessly to have Library of Congress address this issue. At Hennepin County Library, where he was Head Cataloger, he created a new list of subject heads that included more current and culturally appropriate terminology, and he adapted the Anglo American Cataloging Rules (AACR) as well as the DDC to improve user access. When it came to American Indians (1995), Berman seemed a bit misguided in his suggestion to change references from "Indians" to "Native Americans." Terminology is a touchy issue for any group of people, and there is little agreement in Indian Country on the preferred term. (Throughout this paper I use various terms.) However, many argue for keeping the term "Indian" or "American Indian" because it implies a sovereign relationship with the United States government via treaties that other, broader terms such as "Native American" do not. Unfortunately, Berman's aggressive and irreverent approach toward Library of Congress resulted in his alienation, leaving him less able to achieve his goals. However, due to Berman, many others were inspired to take on the issue of bias.

Several authors made important contributions to the literature regarding the way in which classification and subject headings portray groups of people, including women, African Americans, and Latino(a)s. Research by Harris and Clack (1979) is an excellent

synopsis of bias toward groups of people in LCSH, LCC, and DDC. Doris Clack (1975) is also the author of a thorough examination of how LCSH and LCC treat Black literature resources, and how this treatment affects information retrieval. Marielena Fina (1993) describes her experience as a Spanish-speaking patron, who while researching the topic of Latino(a) access to library services, found that materials on this subject were located under the offensive heading LIBRARY SERVICES TO THE SOCIALLY HANDICAPPED. Research into women and bias in subject access continues to this day, but one of the most significant works is Joan Marshall's *On Equal Terms* (1977), which is a thesaurus of nonsexist subject heads relating to women's topics, and includes principles for establishing subject headings relating to people and peoples. Marshall's "LC Labeling: An Indictment" (1972) is also an excellent look at the biased structure of LC subject headings. Hope A. Olson is the foremost researcher on the topic of bias in subject access today, particularly as it pertains to women, and her works will be discussed throughout this paper (1998, 1999, 2001).

As for literature pertaining to American Indians, Thomas Yen-Ran Yeh's "The Treatment of the American Indian in the Library of Congress E-F Schedule" (1971) is a look at the classification of American Indian materials in the LCC. Yeh found that the classification scheme segregates the American Indian from the mainstream of U.S. history, and that the scheme is arranged with bias. In the E-F schedule, there is no provision for chronological arrangement past 1898, the word "massacre" appears frequently, and there is no appropriate place for the topic of civil rights. Yeh makes several interesting suggestions for changes and additions, yet the Library of Congress was not receptive to his proposals.

"The Halt of Stereotyping: When Does the American Indian Enter the Mainstream?" (Young and Doolittle, 1994) summarizes very well the issues of subject access bias in Native American materials. The article focuses on cataloging American Indian art using DDC, LCC, and LCSH. Young and Doolittle address one of the primary problems in cataloging Native American materials, which is that the bulk of American Indian works are assigned to the U.S. history section -- DDC "970" or LCC "E" -- regardless of the discipline. Therefore, art, religion, and history are mixed, which is contrary to the purpose of classification, and all American Indian materials are viewed in the past tense, as part of history rather than the present. Additionally, marginalizing American Indian materials from the mainstream prevents them from being accepted in their appropriate disciplines. Biased terms are used in classification schemes, such as "primitive" and "nonliterate." The authors urge catalogers to challenge the authorities such as OCLC and the Library of Congress. They make the excellent point that accessibility of American Indian materials is not only a cataloging issue but a reference problem -- improper subject headings and classification make information retrieval difficult for reference librarians. Young and Doolittle say we must accept the responsibility of multiculturalism by integrating American Indian materials and questioning classification systems, subject headings, and bibliographic authorities.

Nancy Carol Carter (2002) describes the issue from a law librarian's perspective. Classification tables do not reflect the sovereignty of tribal governments. LCC does not treat American Indian nations consistently with nations, states, or even with territories or cities of the United States. American Indian law materials are classed in the LCC at KF8201-8228 and fall after materials related to the military (this may be a carryover of

the fact that the Bureau of Indian Affairs was originally part of the War Department). Tribal law, which is quite separate from federal Indian law, is in this same section. The author suggests using the currently unused KFY class, so that tribal governments and legal systems would be recognized as the third sovereign that they are. She also notes the lack of an appropriate place for Native Alaskan and Native Hawaiian law. Carter hopes that law librarians will recognize the unique status of American Indian law and begin to think differently about its classification.

### Classification, Bias, and Worldview

All classification systems are in essence biased, in that they are shaped by the cultures and worldviews in which they are created. One of the first to explicitly point this out was A.C. Foskett, who in 1971 wrote that while any classification system claims to be objective, in fact it "is likely to reflect both the prejudices of its time and those of its author" (p.117). Olson (1998) has continued this discussion: "The problem of bias in classification can be linked to the nature of classification as a social construct. It reflects the same biases as the culture that creates it" (¶2). Thus we have American classification systems shaped by Western philosophy and religion, Soviet systems shaped by Marxist-Leninist thought, Chinese systems that emphasize Mao, and Islamic systems that emphasize Muhammad. Native American classification systems are not unbiased, because they also attempt to organize information according to a Native point of view. A biased system may in fact be the most appropriate way to organize certain collections; it becomes problematic when the worldview represented by the classification system is

incompatible with the worldview represented by items in the collection or the collection as a whole.

Western worldviews and Native worldviews are inherently different, and thus, so are their concepts of classification. First, it must be pointed out that there are over 500 American Indian nations, each with a unique culture, language, history, and worldview, and thus these cannot be condensed into a single "Indian" or "Native" perspective. However, there are some general concepts which are common to most Native nations, and I will refer to these concepts as an example of a Native worldview; by this I do not mean to insinuate that I am speaking of a single, monolithic culture. Likewise, by "Western" I am not referring to a single nation, but to the general culture began in classical Greece and Rome, developed in Europe, and spread throughout the colonized world.

According to Olson (1999), the Western tradition of classification comes from Aristotle and his predecessors, who used the concepts of exclusivity, teleology, and hierarchy as the basis for classification. The Western idea of mutual exclusivity, viewing each thing as separate and individual, is in direct opposition to a Native worldview, in which the tendency is to view things as related, interconnected, and whole. Furthermore, while a Western point of view depends on teleology, a linear progression through time toward a goal, a Native point of view is based on the idea of a circle, with more emphasis on space than on time. Finally, the Western notion of hierarchy is incompatible with a Native worldview that places more equal value on relationships, again incorporating holistic concepts of a circle, balance, and an interconnected web. Further discussion of

the contrasts between Native and Western points of view can be found in Deloria (1994) and Allen (1986).

Another difference between Western and Native notions of classification may lie in the concept of classification itself. Hope A. Olson, in her editorial "Classification or Organization: What's the Difference?" (2001) compares dictionary definitions of classification and organization. The various definitions of "classification," "classify," and "class" point to an understanding that classification is a means of systematically arranging individual aggregates. On the contrary, definitions of "organization," "organize," "organum," and "organon" suggest an organic whole made up of connected parts. Therefore, "organization" may be a more appropriate way to approach Native classification.

Olson and Ward (1997) discuss a fundamental problem in the classification of marginalized materials: ghetto versus diaspora. A ghetto isolates marginalized groups by concentrating them in one area; it confines them, keeps them separate, and keeps them "under control" (p. 130). A diaspora disperses them so that they have no identifiable existence, and it displaces them from a place of belonging and identity. Western classification systems can both ghettoize and diasporize marginalized groups, though in the case of American Indian materials they tend to ghettoize.

Thus far in this discussion we can see that classification systems are biased in favor of their creators and thus marginalize materials outside their scope of reference. Due to their fundamental differences, Native concepts of reality are not represented in Western classification systems. Whether American Indian materials are ghettoized or diasporized, they are not organized in a way that makes sense to Native people, and

library users will have difficulty locating them. Next, I will take a look at the treatment of American Indian materials in the DDC and LCC and apply these concepts.

### Dewey Decimal Classification System

The DDC is a top-down classification system that attempts to organize all knowable things. One need look no further than the 200 main class "Religion" to see that it is a biased system, where Christianity occupies numbers 220-289, and "other religions" are relegated to 299. Because the DDC is the most widely used classification scheme in the world, it is worthwhile to examine its bias.

Most American Indian materials are classed in 970 "General History of North America." Immediately, we can see that according to the DDC, Native people are part of the past. According to Deloria (1988), this is one of the most enduring and troublesome stereotypes about American Indians today. How does a Native student feel when he is looking for information about his tribe and a librarian tells him he must look in the history section? The preferred place in DDC for Native materials is 970.00497, "North American native peoples." It should be noted that the terminology has improved in recent editions, from "native races" to "native peoples," though this change has not been made throughout the entire schedule. Additionally, the instructions indicate to class history and civilization of North American native peoples in a specific place with that place; thus we also see some Native materials in 973.0497 (United States) and some under 974-979 (Specific states of United States).

However, since DDC 19, there has only been this one number in 970 (970.00497) for all Native topics, whereas in previous editions there were 970.1 "North American native peoples/Indians of North America", 970.3 "Specific native peoples," 970.4 "Native peoples in specific places in North America," and 970.5 "Government relations with North American native peoples." Older editions also used 970.2 for Native biographies. Currently, 970.1-970.5 appear in the schedules as optional. Many libraries still use the optional numbers in order to create some sort of differentiation in the multitude of Native topics that are classed in 970. These numbers allow for separate tribal and regional sections, which many scholars and American Indian library users find useful. However, using the optional numbers side by side with the new number also creates more confusion. Berman calls the DDC 19 changes simply "irresponsible" (1981, p. 179). Certainly one number provides little opportunity to aggregate diverse topics such as art, literature, and religion; even the optional numbers are not sufficient for this task.

In addition to the 970s, there are other places within the DDC where one can class American Indian materials. Often this involves appending the facet -97 "North American native peoples" from Table 5 (Ethnic and National groups). More specific facets are available in Table 5 and Table 6 (Languages), based on a linguistic grouping of Native nations, such as -972 "Athabascan Indians," which includes Apachean, Diné, Tlingit, and Haida Indians. This type of linguistic grouping is not typically used by Native people or scholars in American Indian studies; rather, most people prefer to group nations according to culture areas. For example, while the Navajo and Tlingit may share linguistic similarities, they have little in common culturally and are located in completely different regions of the United States. However, this does provide libraries with an

option to add specific tribal facets to its classification numbers (e.g. T5-975546 for Seneca Indians).

Some of the other common areas in which catalogers may class Native material are (a) 299.7 "Religions of North American native origin"; (b) 305.897 "American native peoples -- Social aspects"; (c) 307.772 "Tribal communities"; (d) 323.1197 "Indians of North America -- Civil rights"; (e) 497 "North American native languages"; and (f) 897 "Literatures of North American native languages." In addition, American Indian literature written in English is often classed in the 810s, but it may not have a facet specifically indicating that it is by a Native American author. Though these are the specific places in the DDC for native materials, they need not be the only places. By using -08997 (persons treatment -- North American native peoples) as a standard subdivision, a library may spread American Indian materials throughout the DDC scheme if it so chooses.

Catalogers often use 323.1197 for the LC subject heading "Indians of North America -- Government relations," which itself is a catch-all for many works dealing with contemporary Native issues that deserve more specificity. However, this groups American Indian rights with the civil rights of other ethnic groups. American Indian rights are unlike those of other ethnic groups because they derive from treaties with the United States government, which results in a special government-to-government relationship with the United States. The sovereignty and unique government relationships that belong to Native nations are not recognized anywhere in the DDC schedule. The -97 facet, wherever it is used, implies that American Indians have the same status of other ethnic groups, when in fact they have unique political identities.

Terminology in the DDC has largely been cleaned up, and as we will see in the next section, is much better than that used in the LCC. Most references to "native races" or "Indians" have been replaced with "native peoples," and the word "primitive" is rarely used to describe people. However, there are numerous references, mostly in the 700s (Art), to "nonliterate peoples." This is certainly an area of concern when it comes to classifying Native art (if in fact it makes it to the 700s and is not lost in 970.00497).

In terms of DDC hierarchies, American Indian people usually fall under "other" or "specific ethnic or national groups." There are a few particularly offensive locations for native materials in the DDC hierarchy, such as 346.73013, under branches of law, "Disabled persons -- legal status -- United States." WebDewey, the online version of DDC, uses this number for the LC subject heading "Indians of North America--legal status, laws, etc.," which is a very common subject heading dealing with Native law materials. This problem is repeated in 342.73087 "Disabled persons -- legal status -- Constitutional law -- United States." Not only does this once again fail to recognize the special legal status of American Indians, it adds insult to injury by implying that American Indians as well as other minorities are somehow "disabled." I would prefer the number 342.7308997 for federal Indian law, which specifies the American Indian aspect of United States constitutional law without the "disabled" insinuation. However, if a cataloger were using WebDewey or simply copy cataloging, he may not think to make that change. Another example of an offensive

location in WebDewey is Indian Dance and Powwows under 399 "Customs of war and diplomacy," rather than in 793.31 "Folk and national dancing."

Overall, there are several problems with the DDC in terms of how it deals with Native Americans. First, the DDC tends to ghettoize American Indian materials in History of North America, with a corresponding lack of specificity in 970.00497 that makes browsing these materials very difficult. In addition, the location of American Indian materials in the history section contributes to the stereotype of Native peoples as a "vanishing race." The DDC does not specifically address many Native-specific topics, and it organizes topics in a way foreign to Native people (or, not at all). The use of a facet (-97) does not necessarily help collocate Native materials, and in this case this particular facet gives American Indians the same status as other ethnic groups rather than as sovereign nations. Especially in terms of law, the DDC does not recognize the unique sovereign status of American Indian nations, nor their government-to-government relationship with the United States. DDC's terminology, despite being vastly improved, still has some problems when it comes to American Indians, though this may only be apparent to catalogers and those with access to the scope notes. All of these factors make it difficult to locate Native materials and tend to make the collection unfriendly for Native people. However, the DDC is flexible enough, through the use of facets and other means, to attempt to introduce more Native-friendly elements into it.

Library of Congress Classification System

The LCC, unlike DDC, is a bottom-up classification system, so new areas of knowledge are added as they are needed. In this way it may be more conducive to expansion, though change is slow at the Library of Congress. Similar to the DDC, LCC ghettoizes American Indian materials in the History section and separates American Indian history from United States history as a whole. The assigned range for Indians of North America (E75-99) lies between Pre-Columbian America (E51-73) and Discovery of America and early explorations (E100-143). Not only does this once again place American Indians in the past, it also clearly sets the context as colonial by use of terminology such as "discovery."

In addition to reinforcing the stereotype of Native people as a part of the past, LCC also contributes to the stereotype of American Indians as a warlike people by devoting a larger range of numbers to Indian wars (E81-83) and Indian captivities (E85-87) than it does to most other topics (E98). "Such assignments emphasize stereotypes of American indigenous peoples as 'warriors' and 'bloodthirsty savages' while minimizing most aspects of their culture and society" (Burns, Dunkin, Kempthorne, Minkus, and Romaine, 2000, lcc.html ¶ 4). As Yeh (1971) points out, LCC also makes frequent use of the word "massacre," which further contributes to this stereotype.

LCC organizes the bulk of American Indian materials in three subclasses: E78 (by geography), E98 (by topic), and E99 (by tribes and cultures). Within these subclasses, topics are cuttered alphabetically. This is a poor method of organization in each section, as it fails to group nearby localities in the same region and fails to group related topics. Topics as disparate as economic conditions, embroidery, and ethnic identity are placed next to each other, and as Burns, et al. point out, "assigning E98.W2 for 'Warfare.

Scalping' and E98.W8 'Women' suggests that these topics are of equal importance" (2000, lcc.html ¶ 4). The E99 section is problematic not only due to changes in tribal names over time and separation of related tribes, but especially because it does not allow for any topical subdivision. For example, works on Cherokee art, religion, and government will be scattered throughout E99.C5 by main entry rather than grouped by topic. Some native libraries may choose to create their own customized cuttering system to alleviate this problem, but most do not have the time or resources to do so. Also, by providing each nation only with a cutter under a single subclass, rather than a subclass or a range of numbers of its own, LCC does not treat American Indian nations as sovereign entities. Although the Library of Congress has created a separate class for Romanies (DX), about whom there are comparatively fewer published materials, it has not created a separate class for the indigenous peoples of North and South America.

However, there are other locations in LCC for Native materials. Most significant is the K class (law), which includes the range KF 8201-8228 for Indian law, and KF 5660-5662 for Indian lands. As mentioned previously, Carter (2002) has pointed out LCC's lack of recognition of American Indians as a third sovereign in the law class. She has suggested using the currently unused KFY class for tribal law, which would rightfully place the law of Indian nations outside the classifications for federal law affecting Indians.

In addition to the K class, American Indian materials can be found in music (M, ML), literature (PN, PS), languages (PM), and bibliography (Z). Some American Indian materials may be found in art (N-NX), particularly contemporary Native art. The subclass NC825.I42 "Native American arts and crafts" is notable because the term "arts

and crafts" can be a demeaning way to refer to Native art. In addition, some American Indian health material is in the R class, including RA981.A35 for Indian hospitals and RC451.5.I5 for American Indian mental health. American Indians also pop up in a few odd places in the LCC scheme, such as BF432.I5 "Intelligence of Indians."

However, most topics still end up in the E class. Mario Nick Klimaiades, Library Director of the Heard Museum in Phoenix, Arizona shares this example: "The fine basketry of the Pomo People lands in the general classification for Pomo people at E99.P65 as opposed to the basketry arts at NK3649.5. It's as if basketry made by Native Americans is not seriously considered an art form, yet we all know that Native basketry ranks with the best or AS the best in the world" (personal communication, March 27, 2003). Therefore, users browsing other sections of the library will not find American Indian contributions in a variety of disciplines.

LCC has its share of problems when it comes to classifying American Indian materials. Similar to DDC, it perpetuates stereotypes by placing most Native material, incorporating many disciplines, in the history section. In addition, it uses terminology and organization that reinforces colonialism and promotes the image of American Indians as warlike savages. Furthermore, due to alphabetical culling, it allows for very little logical organization of American Indian materials, although it provides much more specificity than the DDC. Both in the organization of the K class and the lack of range for Native nations in the E class, the LCC fails to recognize American Indian tribal sovereignty. Many improvements might be made to LCC, perhaps by adding additional classes in E and K that would recognize sovereignty as well as provide a greater range and better organization of topics. However, many academic libraries with Native

collections are content with LCC as is; perhaps they have grown accustomed to it, and while it has problems, it meets their needs. The ability of LCC to organize materials by tribe, region, and topic, even if materials within those sections are not organized in a logical manner, is useful and does represent an improvement over the one-number approach of the DDC (comparable to the pre DDC-19 optional numbers).

### Native Classification

Despite the biases present in LCC and DDC, they can be effective ways to organize American Indian materials in general libraries with relatively small Native American collections. It is useful for scholars to be able to go to one section and find all American Indian materials in one place, particularly in a large library, and many researchers have already memorized the portion of the classification schedule that applies to them. However, using LCC or DDC in a Native-specific collection can become a frustrating experience. Either system can be useable, particularly if the library takes materials out of DDC 970 or LC E78-99 and diasporizes it into the whole of human knowledge, or if it makes some other modification to LCC or DDC. Yet the biases remain, which make LCC and DDC less than ideal for Native library collections.

Some libraries have decided to discard the Western classification paradigm and use Native classification systems. Native classification systems are based on organization of ideas into categories that are consistent with Native worldviews and relevant to American Indian communities. They tend to use spatial organization and categories that are useful to Native Americans, and they incorporate a sense of

relatedness. Native classification systems that have been developed thus far tend to be bottom-up, based on existing collections and the needs of particular users, rather than top-down, attempting to incorporate the whole of indigenous knowledge. Because library shelves by necessity require a linear arrangement, Native classification systems do not represent an ideal method of Native organization that would incorporate, for example, a circular, interconnected web. However, these systems are a vast improvement over LCC and DDC in the way they organize Native materials according to Native categories.

Canadian libraries are responsible for developing most Native classification systems, and Canadian library associations or grassroots professionals may succeed in developing a single, standardized Native library classification scheme for Canada in the near future (Hills, 1997; Macdonell, Tagami, and Washington, 2003; A. Doyle, personal communication, April 15, 2003). A few notable Canadian Native classification systems are Brian Deer's, which has been used in different forms at several Canadian libraries, and the Ojibway-Cree Cultural Centre's classification, which Hills discusses in *Native Libraries* (1997). Few systems have appeared in the United States, with the exception of a system developed at Native American Educational Services (NAES) in Chicago, which shall be discussed below.

#### *Brian Deer Classification system*

The Brian Deer Classification system (BDC) is one of the most well known Native classification systems, and has also been the model for other Native systems. Brian Deer was one of the first Native MLS librarians in Canada (Hills, 1997, p. 138). He developed several classification systems from scratch, a slightly different system for

each library at which he worked. His categories included topics that were relevant to First Nations libraries in Canada, and attempt "to represent the many realities of First People, within different contexts -- community, regional, national, and global, for example" (Macdonell, et al., 2003, xwi7xwa.htm ¶ 2). He designed his systems to be simple, understanding that Native libraries often had a small staff and limited resources to devote to cataloging. The BDC, according to Burns, et al., is "purely enumerative -- there is no faceting to speak of, and each topic is given its own notation. As new topics evolve, they are slotted into the existing scheme" (2000, xwi7xwa.html ¶ 3). One of its weaknesses, besides its simplicity, is a lack of clear guidelines for application, which results in inconsistencies.

Main classes for the BDC system as used at the Xwi7xwa library are as follows: Reference Materials; Local History; History; International; Education; Economic Development; Housing and Community Development; Criminal Justice System; Constitution (Canada) and First Nations; Self Government; Rights and Title; Natural Resources; Community Resources; Health; World View; Fine Arts; Languages; and Literature. These categories incorporate the scope of materials that might be important to a user of a Native library, and similar topics are located in close proximity to each other. Furthermore, the arrangement of subclasses allows for grouping of similar subtopics; for example, the First Nations are grouped into related cultures rather than being simply listed alphabetically as in LCC or grouped linguistically as in DDC. The BDC also incorporates the First Nations names for themselves, rather than the name anthropologists or outsiders have given them, which is also unlike LCC and DDC.

The BDC is useful for small, community-centered Native collections. It is simple to for catalogers to apply and for users to understand, and it does a better job than LCC or DDC in organizing Native materials into relevant subject areas, using appropriate terminology. The BDC generally improves access to Native library users. However, the BDC is underdeveloped and needs expansion in several subject areas. Furthermore, it remains local in focus and would need some adaptation to make it appropriate for use at the national level in Canada or in Native libraries in the United States.

#### *Native American Educational Services classification system*

Native American Educational Services (NAES) in Chicago had developed its own classification system. It is a tribally-centered system developed by non-librarian scholars to better reflect the NAES collection (K. Webster, personal communication, March 12, 2003). It was adopted in March 2003, and it was distributed to American Indian Library Association members in hopes that it might be helpful in providing better subject and classification access to Native collections.

The NAES main classes are for the most part different from the BDC, although there are some similarities. The NAES main classes are Community Development; Curriculum; Education; History; Human Services; Language; Life-ways; Literature; Mass Communications; Public Policy, Government and Law; General Reference; Religion and Philosophy; Science and Technology; and Social Sciences. Within each main class are several levels of subdivision, using a decimal number hierarchy. The NAES system covers a huge range of topics, uses Native terminology, and even includes other indigenous peoples throughout the world.

Though the NAES system is currently only used at a single institution, I believe it is extensive enough to use at other Native collections in the United States without requiring extensive adaptation except for region-specific topics. It covers many subjects that would be found in both American Indian libraries as well as the vertical files of many Native organizations, with a fairly high degree of specificity. It approaches knowledge from a Native point of view and uses terminology familiar to American Indian subject experts. It makes important distinctions that are relevant in a Native collection, such as Indian/non-Indian, urban/rural, and traditional/contemporary. It has room for growth, and larger libraries may find it more suitable than the BDC. The NAES system appears to be user-friendly and Native-friendly, yet this remains to be tested. Because it is so new and has had little exposure, it is difficult to measure the effectiveness and potential for longevity of the NAES system.

### Case Studies

I have selected three libraries, each a different type of library using a different classification system, to discuss the classification issues I have presented above. The American Indian Resource Center represents a public library using the DDC; the UC Berkeley Native American Studies Library represents an academic research library using LCC; and the Xwi7xwa Library represents a community academic library using the BDC.

#### *American Indian Resource Center*

The American Indian Resource Center (AIRC) is a special collection of American Indian materials within the Los Angeles County public library system that uses the DDC to classify its materials. The AIRC's materials are cataloged centrally by the County library, so the AIRC staff has little control over classification. However, the AIRC has employed numerous organizational methods to make the collection more accessible.

Without altering the DDC, the AIRC was able to create native-specific categories within the collection. One important step was to accommodate "user-community convenience by arranging materials according to tribe" (Hills, 1997, p. 112). Besides a tribal section, the AIRC librarian has also created other categories, such as regional groupings, treaties, and teacher's resources. These groupings are aligned with the way in which Native library users seek information.

However, a problem remains in the collection due to the way items are classified in the DDC. There are still a large number of materials in 970.00497 and 973.0497, literally hundreds of books on topics ranging from music and poetry to astronomy and ethnic identity of contemporary Native filmmakers. In a general library with only a few shelves of Native American materials, this might be acceptable and even preferable, since it brings the Native American materials together, but to a Native-specific collection, it is unworkable. Because the majority of users of this collection depend on shelf browsing rather than catalog access, the classification is even more important. Past AIRC librarians made slight adjustments to DDC numbers, such as moving 970.2 to 920, "to bring materials on the same subject together, instead of leaving them arbitrarily and irrationally scattered (in the Native's ideological scheme of things)" (Hills, 1997, p. 112).

The current AIRC librarian has embarked on a project to do a comprehensive audit of the 970 section, which would pull the majority of these books out and put them into the collection with more appropriate DDC numbers (literature will go to the 800s, art to the 700s, etc.). This is a long process, which, with the aid of a volunteer, is nearing its first stage of completion (M. McLaughlin, personal communication, April 1, 2003). In the process, the AIRC has in essence created a Native version of the DDC. This reclassification project will put a burden on the County cataloging department to change the records of these materials, but it will result in a much better organized collection. According to Hills, "this is a fundamental and comprehensive problem -- the 'logical' organization of materials -- and needs to be addressed realistically, using Native concepts of reality, so Indian users can feel comfortable looking for things in a library" (1997, p. 112).

#### *UC Berkeley Native American Studies Library*

The UC Berkeley Native American Studies Library (NASL) is a special collection in an academic library setting and is part of Berkeley's Ethnic Studies Library. The library supports the university's Native American Studies program and uses LCC to organize its materials.

UC Berkeley's NASL developed a modified version of LCC, which it used until approximately 2001. It primarily altered the cuttering system to bring works about a particular tribe together and to allow for some subdivision within books on that tribe. It also attempted to bring some groups of tribes together, such as the tribes of the Iroquois confederacy (Mohawk, Onondaga, Oneida, Cayuga, Seneca, Tuscarora) in E99.I7.x and

the Five Civilized Tribes (Cherokee, Choctaw, Creek, Chickasaw, Seminole) in E99.F6.x, rather than have them scattered alphabetically. These changes were useful for shelf browsing and were an attempt to introduce a sense of a Native sense of reality into LCC. However, it resulted in an enormous amount of time in technical processing for what amounted to rather small changes. The NASL has since returned to straight LCC.

A more significant issue than classification at the NASL is the lack of appropriate subject headings. Library of Congress Subject Headings that deal with American Indians are a subject for another paper and are as much a problem in subject access to Native materials as classification. The NASL librarian is currently working on a Native American thesaurus, which if approved by the National Cataloging Authority could be used by other Native libraries (J. Berry, personal communication, March 28, 2003).

### Xwi7xwa Library

The Xwi7xwa Library is affiliated with the First Nations House of Learning and supports the Native Teacher Education Program at the University of British Columbia in Vancouver, Canada. The collection is not intended to be a research collection; rather, it is an "action-based" collection, reflecting the ways in which First Nations people use the materials (Macdonell, et al., 2003, xwi7xwa.htm ¶ 2). Xwi7xwa uses the Brian Deer Classification system (BDC) to organize its materials.

Xwi7xwa adopted its version of BDC from another library, so it was not designed specifically for this library. Xwi7xwa has expanded some aspects of the BDC schedule, but it does not have the resources to develop BDC into a more complete and extensive

classification system. Because so few libraries use BDC, there is not enough dialogue among professionals to keep the system up to date.

The BDC has been effective at the Xwi7xwa library. It is simple for the users to understand, though it initially confuses university students accustomed to LCC. It uses the full range of the alphabet, uses classes familiar to Native people, and pulls together subject areas in a way that LCC does not. It is also better able to handle the interdisciplinary nature of many Native materials. Xwi7xwa may end up switching to LCC to conform with the University of British Columbia libraries, but Ann Doyle, acting head of the library, wishes to retain the BDC. According to Doyle, LCC does not treat indigenous knowledge adequately, and the Brian Deer Classification system is an important part of the body of Indigenous scholarship at the university that Xwi7xwa should retain (A. Doyle, personal communication, April 15, 2003).

## Conclusion

Western classification systems, such as the Dewey Decimal Classification system and the Library of Congress Classification system, are inherently biased, thus marginalizing American Indian materials in libraries. This hinders access to Native materials, promotes stereotypes, and alienates American Indian library users. These classification systems are based on concepts that are in direct opposition to Native methods of organization and ways of seeing the world.

There are several potential solutions to these problems. One solution is to modify LCC and DDC classification at the local library level to suit the needs of the collection,

as several libraries have done, including the American Indian Resource Center and the UC Berkeley Native American Studies Library. Another, more difficult solution would be to encourage LCC and DDC to improve their systems to include better subject access to Native American materials. Olson and Ward (1997) have presented an interesting alternative, which is to design a user-friendly front end to the online catalog that would attempt to bypass classification bias. Finally, some libraries may choose to use a Native classification system. Some might use an existing Native classification system, such as Xwi7xwa using Brian Deer, or some might create their own systems, as NAES has done.

The American Indian library community can take measures to address these classification issues. Librarians can network and discuss classification, including suggestions and experiences for modifying and adapting DDC and LCC to local collections. Also, professional associations such as the American Indian Library Association (AILA) can lobby the Library of Congress and OCLC to improve the DDC and LCC as well as improve original subject cataloging that many other libraries copy. Moreover, AILA can encourage development, improvement, and wider use of Native classification systems, and it can recruit subject experts to contribute to this effort. Finally, the Native library community can educate non-Indian libraries and librarians about these issues and the effects they have on both Indian and non-Indian users.

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