

# American Indian Libraries Newsletter



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## The Library Experience—A Native American Viewpoint

Velma S. Salabiye

I am a Navajo. I've slept on sheepskins. I've herded sheep. I've chopped wood. I've hauled water. I've experienced the true meaning of living in harmony with Nature and appreciate the fruits of Mother Earth and Father Sky. I have a deep-rooted respect for my grandfather and my father, for they represent the strong secure base for my being. My grandmother and my mother complement and add to the fullness of life. I am secure in knowing the value of togetherness, of closeness, and of sharing. I tell you these things because without my strong Indian identity, I would not be where I am today. I tell you these things to give you an insight to my opinions in regard to the keeping and giving of accurate information about the Native American.

I assume that we are all aware of the misleading, inaccurate portrayals of the Native American in early history. I use the term Native American as defined by the Council on Interracial Books for Children, which refers to people living in the U.S. who trace their lineage to the inhabitants of these lands and who consider themselves to be Native American. The term "Indian" is a misnomer applied by Columbus to the enormously diverse people he met in this hemisphere. We are fortunate that he was not seeking Turkey, for today, we would be Native American Turkeys. The tendency to generalize about the Native American is too prevalent an occurrence; we are not all alike. As brought out in *Stereotypes, Distortions and Omissions in U.S. History Textbooks*, "... textbooks ... present 'Indian cultures' as oversimplified or distorted descriptions of the enormously diverse and dynamic Native American societies. ... Complex societies and cultures may be written of as 'warlike,' as 'gatherers' or as 'nomads.'" Further, "the greed and profits, the trickery and deceit, the racism and genocide that have consistently shaped U.S. actions toward Native Americans are, for the most part, ignored. One is left with a sense of the inevitable triumph of human progress over 'Indians'."

Television and movies, even today, still contribute to the wide range of stereotypes and characterizations of the "Indian." For both Native Americans and non-Native Americans, the term evokes images that have little relation to real human beings. I hardly conceive of my ancestors as savages and renegades who lurked in the wilderness until it

was time to pillage and raid. Ethnocentric questions have been my cultural shock. No, I do not have a totem pole in front of my tepee. No, my father does not hunt buffalo on weekends. No, I do not know how to speak "Indian." It's a grim, negative experience to learn about one's people in such a manner, only to have to be labeled "culturally deprived."

I have intentionally presented a negative picture. I do so because this is the type of information that has been transmitted through the various mass media. The recognition by Native Americans that there still exists this kind of information can be used as a stepping-stone to bring about positive direction. Many Native Americans will and have become angry over the prejudices and experiences of injustice. The power of information cannot be underestimated—it is too powerful a weapon. Native Americans cannot afford to sit back and let technology happen around them and remain sad statistics of poor health, poor income, poor education, and poor housing.

American history stripped me of cultural pride. I had no successful models to follow or heroes to look up to. Manuelito, Barboncito, Segundo are alien names. One may recognize Geronimo, Red Cloud, and Sitting Bull. Yet, these are men who gave pride and leadership to their respective nations. Speeches of wisdom and knowledge have passed the lips of great warriors, only to be distorted as moans and grunts. I would like to share a quote that impressed me many years ago.

The Navajo leader, Manuelito, speaking to his grandchild said:

... the whites have many things which we Navajos need. But we cannot get them. It is as though the whites were in a grassy canyon and there they have wagons, plows, and plenty of food. We Navajos are upon the dry mesa. We can hear them talking, but we cannot get them. My grandchild, education is the ladder. Tell our people to take it . . . .

The wisdom of our forefathers can be conveyed through the positive vehicle of librarianship, archival work, or any title given to areas of information science. There is a definite need for Native American librarians. As of November 1976, the Office of Library Personnel Resources of the American Library Association lists fif-

teen Native American librarians. Margaret Hollemar summarized this need:

Native American communities have a justifiable distrust of Anglos and their traditional institutions, and nothing could be more Anglo or traditional than a library. Only a person they like and trust could establish and get them to use the type of informational center that is essential for the educational, economic, and social welfare of any community in modern society. The basic right to the "pursuit of happiness" involves a guarantee of equal access to information. Moreover, their libraries are their cultural archives.

To be a viable positive force, we as information specialists need actively to solicit the participation of the known American Indian populace in recruiting patronage and support.

For the 25,000-square-mile reservation of the Navajo Nation, for example, Margaret Wood, a Navajo librarian, claimed there were four public libraries, limited school libraries, two academic libraries, two special libraries, and a bookmobile service. There has not been a noticeable change since 1974. Current statistics as to the number of professional Navajo librarians are not available. Marvin Pollard, librarian at Navajo Community College, states:

Most Navajo people have not had an opportunity to use a good library and are not generally well oriented toward library services. For Navajos to recognize the value of a library, they must have a good experience in the library and the best time for this is when the person is young.

I am in full agreement. Personally, I remember libraries as hush-hush places where questions were a nuisance.

I stumbled through undergraduate studies utilizing the minimum of library materials; how many of our youth face this obstacle? The wealth of information to be sought and discovered, to be researched and put in usable form, is simply stored. How many of our youth venture into reference tools such as *Books in Print*, the Public Affairs Information Service, the ERIC catalog, or the Human Relations Area File? The volume of aids is tremendous, yet how far do people get if there remains the negativeness of the library atmosphere? Native American librarians can and have helped in bringing about positive direction. Cultural sensitivity, the knowledge of diversity among Indian people, and just seeing another brown face are all contributing to better library services. We have a long way to go in filling the information gap with professionals. We, as a people, have gone too long with non-Native Americans posing as keepers of written material about us. We deserve to know what has been written about us, to know what the general public is learning. We don't need any more cowboy-frontier stories; we don't need to be researched any more to earn someone a Ph.D. What we do need is information power to fight a modern world that has been able to use this powerful weapon against us for so long. This condition has hindered the progress of socioeconomic development and upward mobility of the Native American people. Yet, we have survived while maintaining a unique culture and rich tradition.

We are in an era of self-determination. More than ever, we are in dire need of accurate information in terms of current, timely, hard data and statistics. During an address to the EDA reservations planners in El Paso in May 1975, George Blue Spruce stated:

In the Library of Congress Main Catalog, there are—under the heading, Indians of North America—12 drawers of cards. Twelve drawers contain approximately 18,000 cards and of this number, only 16 cards are under the subheading Statistics and 11 cards under the subheading Census. Yet under the subheadings Pottery and Legends, there are 103 for the former and 314 for the latter. Under the subheadings Population and Income, there are no cards at all.

We live our culture. We don't need more literature on pottery and legends. If we are to become self-sufficient and economically stable, we need to know our strength in numbers.

This need has been stated by Navajo Tribal Chairman Peter MacDonald in the *Ten Year Report*:

... modern governmental functioning requires accurate and timely information which is organized in a usable fashion. For Tribal governments, information which is collected, evaluated and organized by a Tribal office, rather than by an outside agency, is an essential component of self-determination.

As brought out in the quotes, the need for information is known. How do we judge information about the Native American? In her article on "Library Service to American Indians" June Smith stated:

Since many librarians and publishers are not fully cognizant of Indian values and cultural contributions, guidelines for the evaluation of Native American materials are greatly needed. Two excellent guideline statements compiled by Native Americans ... are found in *Textbooks and the American Indian* and *American Indians: An Annotated Bibliography of Selected Library Resources*.

More recently, the Council on Interracial Books for Children published *Stereotypes, Distortions and Omissions in U.S. History Books*, which includes a checklist section "designed to apply textbook treatment of all Native Americans in a general manner. The criteria are designed not only to provide factual information, but to provide a perspective lacking in the textbooks; the perspective of the people whose homes and lands were the foundation upon which the U.S. was built."

Other considerations in handling Native American materials and services will be briefly discussed. The financial aspect is a problem every institution must face. We spend as much time justifying our existence as we do getting the job done. We need to keep up with news about monies available from federal agencies such as EDA, HEW, and HUD, state agencies, and private foundations

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such as Weatherhead, Ford, and Carnegie. We need to expand our research capabilities, to be able to write our own proposals. We need to know about budget preparation, percentage of allocation to specific needs, and budget projections.

Native American libraries and archives need stable money not only for security but to assure them the freedom to choose and purchase needed materials for a specific clientele. The all too common problem faced by small libraries is the receipt of discards. Granted, some material may be of some value some of the time. However, too often boxes of outdated books only add clutter and confusion. The problem is multiplied when the staff is untrained or consists of volunteers. Seed money is needed for a solid basic reference collection and an accurate core collection of books by and about Native Americans. Annual budget preparations should include travel money for training sessions and workshops. Regardless of priority, space is a major consideration. Planning and periodic weeding need to become routine parts of the job.

The term "collections" has been previously mentioned. The success of an information center requires community involvement. It is important that the information needs of the community are assessed and that these needs are addressed in the selection policy. Moreover, the collection should include resources of which the community may not be aware.

Minutes of the Tribal Council should be requested and included in the collection. Legal documents, such as *Felix Cohen's Handbook of Federal Indian Law*, Charles Kappler's *Indian Affairs, Laws, and Treaties*, and the more recent *National Indian Law Library Catalogue* published by the Native American Rights Fund, need to be part of the reference collection. Annual reports from the Tribal Departments, the Indian Health Service, the Bureau of Indian Affairs' federal and state agencies serving the reservation all contain statistics and background information needed by researchers. Theses and dissertations by and about Native Americans, particularly those of a specific tribe and/or reservation, should be sought. Dictionaries and tapes of the native language should be included. Last but not least, there should be a collection of feasibility studies. Thousands of dollars are spent annually by tribal governments for feasibility studies only to have the final report become a part of some administrator's personal collection. Information already collected and recorded should be used to avoid the time spent "re-inventing the wheel."

Keeping all this in mind, what should the goals and objectives of Native American libraries be? I suggest seven general areas:

1. To be a centrally organized information system to assess the availability of needed information.
2. To provide information support to a specific clientele through immediate accessibility by specialist staff members and specialized resources.
3. To reduce duplication of effort, to enhance interagency communication, and to stimulate creative ideas.
4. To develop a full service and maintenance program, reference, information-referral service, acquisition and processing of materials, circulation, special files, etc.

5. To recommend, request, and provide control and access to relevant materials.
6. To effect a closer collaboration among school, public, and special libraries in the area by working cooperatively on comprehensive rules, policies, and procedures.
7. To develop and publish periodic bibliographic tools.

In order to achieve these goals and objectives, there must be cooperation among existing information centers, libraries, and governmental agencies. Cooperation is necessary in advising the Native American population of the potential of information services. Specialized resources and personnel should be shared. The development and implementation of comprehensive rules, policies, and procedures require cooperative effort. These policies need to address collection development, circulation, gifts, replacement, binding, weeding, evaluation, selection, ordering, and classification. Finally, care must be exercised to assure that the library functions within the framework of realistic expectations based on cooperative effort and support.—VSS (*Navajo*), *Librarian, American Indian Studies Center, University of California, Los Angeles.*

## Native Americans and Libraries: Locating the Literature

Richard G. Heyser

In my initial experience as a professional librarian, I found myself needing answers to questions relevant to my work. All too often these answers were discovered through trial and error, but most often I found it easier and more beneficial to learn from the experience of others. One way I accomplished this was to consult my colleagues at Navajo Community College, but as this was also their initial library experience, I sometimes found myself still lacking an answer. Librarians outside the Navajo Reservation were also consulted; but I generally found them to be unfamiliar with our particular situation. The primary source for answers to my questions existed in the reading of materials written about circumstances similar to mine. The problem was in locating these materials, and this is the problem to be dealt with in this article.

The first step in my research was to locate the indexes most pertinent to my subject area, "Native Americans and Libraries," and then to search them for citations pertinent to my topic. These indexes were searched from their origin to their termination or through December 1976, whichever was the case. My own general knowledge and my use of Sheehy's *Guide to Reference Books* were the bases for the decision as to which indexes should be searched for pertinent citations. The indexes selected are as follows: *Cannons' Bibliography of Library Economy* and *Library Literature* for library science; *Readers' Guide to Periodical Literature* for general listings; *Social Sciences Index* and its predecessors *Social Sciences and Humanities Index* and *International Index* for the social sciences; *Monthly Catalog* for government publications; *Education Index*, *Current Index to Journals in Education*, and *Resources in Education* for education; and the *Index to Literature on the American Indian*, *American Indian Index*, *The*

*American Indian in Graduate Studies*, and the *Reference Encyclopedia of the American Indian* for Native Americans.

Before the indexes could be searched, there existed the problem of which subject headings to look under. There was a total of more than sixty different subject headings in the various indexes that were identified and searched, of which forty-seven contained pertinent citations. Only one index, *Readers' Guide*, contained a subject heading directly linking the general categories of Native Americans and libraries. This heading was "Indians of North America—Libraries." All others required more specific terms or a guessing game. The most productive subject headings were: "American Indians" in *Resources in Education* with fifty-seven citations; "Public Libraries—Services to North American Indians" in *Library Literature* with thirty-seven citations; "Library Service" in *Resources in Education* with twenty-nine citations; and all other headings with substantially less. The citations in the various subject headings of *Resources in Education* were most often duplicates appearing under the heading "American Indians" and specific library-related headings such as "Library Service," "Library Programs," and "Library Materials." There was also duplication of citations within other subject headings within an individual index.

The most productive indexes in terms of number of citations were: *Resources in Education* with sixty pertinent citations; *Library Literature* with fifty-seven pertinent citations; *Readers' Guide* with twenty pertinent citations; *Index to Literature on the American Indian* with fifteen pertinent citations; and the remaining indexes with five or less pertinent citations. The duplication of citations among the various indexes was great; still, a total of 137 different citations was located among the various indexes. The earliest works found were Everett Sommerville Brown's master's thesis entitled "Preface to a Chronological Index of Indian Tribes in the Candelot Papers in the Academy of Pacific Coast History (Hubert Howe Bancroft Library)," written in 1908, and the U.S. Office of Indian Affairs' *Books for Indian School Libraries*, published in 1913.

### Conclusions

Several conclusions can be drawn from this research. First, the literature on Native Americans and libraries is significantly lacking. Second, only the indexes *Resources in Education* and *Library Literature* need be searched to obtain a majority of the citations on this topic. Of these two indexes, *Resources in Education* is recommended because an abstract of the citation is available, so its usefulness to the individual's particular needs can be more easily ascertained. The documents are also easily obtained from ERIC (Educational Resources Information Center). Third, the most productive subject headings within these two indexes are "American Indians" and the various specific headings under "Library" in *Resources in Education* and "Public Libraries—Services to North American Indians" in *Library Literature*. Finally, beware of the subject heading "Indian" or "Indians" in *Library Literature* and other indexes, as it most often pertains to the Asian Indians, not the American Indian.—RGH, Doctoral Candidate, School of Library Science, Florida State University.

## Special News

### *White House Preconference on Indian Library and Information Services On or Near Reservations*

The first meeting of the Advisory Committee of the White House Preconference on Indian Library and Information Services On or Near Reservations was held in Tulsa, Oklahoma, November 17 through November 19, 1977. The members of the advisory committee discussed the site, content, and methodology for the preconference and the participant selection process. The second meeting is scheduled for February 1978.

### *California Ethnic Services Task Force*

Several applications for LSCA grants submitted to California State Librarian Ethel S. Crockett focused on improved access to ethnic materials. Common needs and approaches identified could best be met through a cooperative effort. This given, the East Bay Cooperative System and Oakland Public Library, the Los Angeles Public Library, the South Bay Cooperative Library System, and the Los Angeles County Public Library System developed a joint project proposal to address the problems associated with ethnic and non-English-language collection development and services. The effort resulted in the establishment of the California Ethnic Services Task Force, with its goal of developing tools and methodologies to assist California librarians in establishing collections and services to meet the needs of California's ethnic populations.

The task force is structured so as to solicit support and cooperative working relationships from the cosponsoring library systems, experts in the field, the California State Library, and the task force membership. The task force is divided into six subcommittees, each charged with one objective, a coordinating chairperson and a California State Library minority services consultant.

The task force, funded at \$123,530 for FY 77/78, undoubtedly has great potential for statewide impact and help for libraries and librarians serving ethnic peoples. The task force is a fifteen-member group appointed by the state librarian with the charge of implementing the project's six objectives and publishing much-needed guides and resource information.

### *Saskatchewan Indian Federated College*

The newly established Saskatchewan Indian Federated College, University of Regina, Regina, Saskatchewan, is the first Indian-controlled university in North America. The college has a library that addresses the information needs of the students.

### *Homsim Culture Center*

Clara Moon, research librarian of Northern Sierra Indians, Inc. (307 Commercial St., Nevada City, CA 95959), reports that the Northern Sierra Indians' Homsim Culture Center has established an Indian library to serve the Nevada County community. It is open to the whole community, and the planning group hopes to be able to bring in professional services to teach the community the works of their ancestors. They have received funds through revenue sharing, but this was a very small amount. They are currently seeking funding through government agencies.

## Letters to the Editor

Dear Dr. Metoyer:

Congratulations on your fine publication, the *American Indian Libraries Newsletter*. It is a much needed resource in the Indian community. The need for tribal libraries has become more essential. I notice in your recent newsletter that you will be giving the guidelines on how that can be developed. What I would also like to know is where can tribes turn for funding sources. Americans for Indian Opportunity received many inquiries for help from tribes on how to develop their own libraries.

LaDonna Harris, President  
Americans for Indian Opportunity  
Plaza Del Sol Building, Suite 403  
600 Second St., N. W.  
Albuquerque, NM 87102

Dear Mr. Genia:

I have just finished reading your article "Meeting the Learning Resource Needs of American Indian College Students" in the *American Indian Libraries Newsletter*, Volume 1, Numbers 3/4, Spring/Summer 1977.

You said many important things that need to be heard not only by faculty working on the college level but also by public school administrators and staff who have been given the responsibility for the education of Indian children, K-12.

We have had a federally funded project, "Home-School Coordinator Training Program," here at the University of Wisconsin-Stout since 1972. Our program works with adult Indians who are serving in a liaison position to bring the Indian community into a closer relationship with public schools and to provide greater educational service to Indian children. At the same time, the home-school coordinators, numbering about fifty, are enrolled in college courses that are directed toward improving the skills they indicate are most important.

We have observed an interesting phenomenon. The home-school coordinators achieve at a high level when they are in classes made up entirely of Native Americans. In classes where there is a majority of non-Indians, the achievement rate is much lower. Our staff, in trying to understand the reasons for this, have observed several things:

1. When the home-school coordinators are in classes by themselves, they gain strength from each other in educating the faculty as to *how* they learn best. Many faculty members have told me that they feel they have gained more than they have been able to give to their students.
2. Again, when they are in classes by themselves, home-school coordinators have said that the *content* of the classes is geared to their needs. They have expressed pleasure in attending a class in which the emphasis in the content is based on material for which they have meaningful use. Interestingly enough, the faculty is covering the same material required by the course syllabus. Could it be that emphasis is changed in certain segments of the course to meet the needs of the students?
3. It is quite possible that American Indians are just like everyone else! To have some control over one's

education and to receive recognition for the validity of one's background provides an impetus for achieving on a high level. The idea is so simple and clear. But so difficult for institutions to accept.

The National Advisory Council on Indian Education in *The Third Annual Report to the Congress of the United States*, March 1976, states on page 461:

According to the latest available figures from the Office of Education, there are approximately 339,000 Indian students in public schools. In addition, there are approximately 55,000 Indian children served by the BIA Federal School System. Thus, four out of every six Indian students can be found in the public schools. On Federal Indian Reservations, three of every four Indian students are in a public school. Thus the predominant responsibility for effective education programs lies in the public school sector.

If more Indian high school students need to go on to higher education in order to provide impact through employment in the public schools, a monumental task remains before us. The "fundamental mismatch," as you state, must be corrected.

Thank you for your interesting and thoughtful article. I plan to share it with both university personnel and home-school coordinators. The American Library Association office in Chicago is graciously sending extra copies of the newsletter for this purpose.

Freda M. Wright, Director  
Home-School Coordinator Training Program  
University of Wisconsin-Stout  
102 Ray Hall  
Menomonie, WI 54751

## Notes from the Editor

Cheryl Metoyer, Ph.D.

I have been bombarded these first five months of teaching. During this time, I have had the opportunity to exchange information with a number of students, librarians, and library educators. Once they have connected me with Indian library services, a lively discussion often ensues. I find it gratifying to note the interest and enthusiasm that is displayed on such occasions. Often I find myself attempting to respond to a number of questions, some of which I am able to answer, while others become referrals.

However, the frequency of such questions suggests that those of us involved in Indian library services need to begin addressing these queries. Therefore, I have decided to list the most frequently asked questions in this editorial. My reasons for listing these questions are twofold: (1) it is hoped that those of you who have pertinent answers will send me your replies, and (2) these questions serve as an indicator of the importance of familiarizing ourselves and others with the parameters of American Indian library service. The questions are divided into five categories:

1. Definitions, Descriptions, and History;



2. Funding, Ownership, and Cooperation;
3. Personnel and Training;
4. Programs and Services; and
5. Buildings and Architecture.

#### *Definitions, Descriptions, and History*

1. What is an American Indian library?
2. Is a "tribal library" synonymous with an "Indian community library"?
3. Where are the American Indian libraries located?
4. Are Indian libraries located only on reservations?
5. When and where was the first tribal library founded?
6. How many American Indian libraries are there?

#### *Funding, Ownership, and Cooperation*

1. What are the funding sources for American Indian libraries?
2. How is the ownership of a tribal library determined?
3. Does each tribe have its own library?
4. Do tribal libraries have a formal liaison with the American Indian Studies departments of colleges and universities?
5. Do any of the American Indian libraries share interlibrary loan privileges with local public libraries?
6. Are American Indian libraries formally linked with Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) school libraries?
7. Are the American Indian libraries joined in a cooperative system?

#### *Personnel and Training*

1. What is the average number of professional and paraprofessional staff in a tribal library?
2. Have library science courses, designed to train and educate personnel for employment in American Indian libraries, been developed?
3. If such courses exist, which library schools offer them?
4. Are library internship programs available within American Indian libraries?

#### *Programs and Services*

1. Do Indian libraries contain only those materials which relate to the tribe's cultural heritage?
2. What types of programs for children are operating in tribal libraries?
3. Are bookmobiles a facet of Indian library service in rural, reservation, and urban libraries?
4. Has the computer been utilized in reservation areas?

5. Which classification systems are utilized in reservation libraries?

#### *Buildings and Architecture*

1. Which architectural styles are used in building American Indian libraries?
2. Do any of the American Indian libraries have unique or unusual design features?
3. Are reservation libraries required to comply with county or state building codes?

After reading and reflecting upon these questions, it becomes apparent that people are beginning to inquire about basic aspects of Indian library service. The variety of questions also suggests that those of us who are interested in Indian library services need to pool our knowledge and begin spreading the word about our work.

I invite and urge those of you involved in American Indian library services to address these questions and to send in your responses. By sharing our answers, we will be strengthening the network of information exchange and thereby fulfilling a major goal of the *American Indian Libraries Newsletter*.—*CM (Cherokee), UCLA, Graduate School of Library and Information Science, Powell Library Building, Los Angeles.*

## **Public Notice**

### *Announcement of Position for Head Librarian, Northern Montana College*

Salary/Rank: Commensurate with experience, \$14,000 minimum.

Qualifications: MLS from ALA-accredited library school. Successful experience in academic library administration. Must have vision to develop new facilities for students and faculty who combine devotion to the traditional liberal arts curriculum with vocational-technical education. Computer training desirable.

Starting date: Not later than July 1, 1978.

Application: Individuals interested in being considered for the position should send a letter and résumé outlining educational background and work experience. Placement materials should also be forwarded to: Dr. Kenneth W. Blair, Acting Dean of the College, Northern Montana College, Harve, MT 59501.

Application Deadline: February 1, 1978.

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