

Moving From Theory to Praxis: Designing Participatory Archival Indigenous Information Ethics Education

ALLISON B. KREBS

Abstract: Indigenous information ethics is an emerging field of interdisciplinary scholarship that has serious implications for both archival theory and practice. While the issues involved are complex, the venues currently available for sustained discussion are limited. These include the proposed SAA Forums on the Protocols for Native American Archival Materials in 2009, 2010, and 2011, and the American Library Association Office of Information Technology Policy Cultural Heritage and Living Culture: Defining The U.S. Library Position on Access and Protection of Traditional Cultural Expression conferences (<http://wo.ala.org/tce/>). From an indigenous standpoint the First Archivist Circle, the American Indian Library Association, as well as the National Tribal Archives, Libraries and Museums Conferences and Institutes provide additional venues of sporadic discussion concerning these issues.

Given the current environment of policy development relating to these critical indigenous information issues, there is need for a more sustained and substantive conversation. This presentation outlines ways in which Web 2.0 and Learning 2.0 technologies and modalities can be used to create a venue for this conversation.

Based within personal experience, the author proposes a potential hybrid on-line learning course including multiple site cohorts, video-conferencing component, buttressed with a course management site, resource wiki, podcasts and digital story module creation. The concept is to frame the issues from a theoretical and policy perspective and then work with pairs of indigenous and non-indigenous participants to model the practices suggested within the Protocols.

Outcomes include active engagement within a supportive structured environment, development and documentation of best practices, and participatory creation of learning resources which can be used independently by the greater archival community going forward, hopefully creating a professional community of practice articulate in these issues.

About the author:

Allison B. Krebs: As an indigenous person, I have both a personal and professional commitment to helping the archival record speak to benefit the continuing revitalization taking place within indigenous communities.

While completing my MLS as a Knowledge River Scholar at the University of Arizona I carved out a research agenda related to diversity and information: indigenous information ecology. The

conceptual exploration of indigenous information ecology highlights the different ways information is handled, behaves, and is respected within indigenous communities.

Within this ecology, there is a desperate need for thoughtful and thought provoking articulation of the issues embedded within the emergent field of indigenous archival theory and praxis.

The geometric growth of tribal archives, libraries, museums, cultural centers and tribal colleges actively engaged in repatriation of information from the diaspora of non-indigenous institutions of memory has created vibrant viable locations for reconnection of indigenous peoples with the records, oral histories, and language documentation that have been generated about them. The potential for nuanced contextual meaning making from these dormant materials is formidable.

At the same time that an energetic, articulate indigenous voice is beginning to weigh in on these issues, the pressure exerted by economic incentives to exploit indigenous knowledge in terms of biodiversity, genetic engineering, and pharmaceutical innovation is financially staggering.

Within my PhD studies at the iSchool at the University of Washington I plan to articulate, define, reframe, advocate for and champion this field of archival practice from an indigenous standpoint.

My experience working in tribal government administration and education reinforces the reality that these issues are not strictly academic concerns but practical concerns buttressing the defense of sovereign nation rights throughout Indian Country.

I am a graduate of the first class of women of Yale College, have developed archives on Mayan hieroglyphic sculpture, and Malian traditional architecture among other professional endeavors. I serve on the Michigan Indian Education Council Board of Directors and am a member of the Sault Ste. Marie Tribe of Chippewa Indians. I am an NSF Endangered Language Video Documentary Fellow.