Changing Subject Headings related to Indigenous Peoples: Technical Implications for Large Library Systems

Christine Bone

Cataloguing and Metadata Librarian, University of Manitoba Libraries

christine.bone@umanitoba.ca

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AMA (Association for Manitoba Archives) MAIN database

Working Group:

- Brett Lougheed, Chair – University Archivist/Digital Curator, University of Winnipeg Archives
- Christine Bone – Cataloguing and Metadata Librarian, University of Manitoba Libraries
- Camille Callison – Indigenous Services Librarian, University of Manitoba Libraries
- Janet La France – Généalogiste, Centre du patrimoine, Société historique de Saint-Boniface
- Randy Ranville – Former Genealogist, Metis Culture and Heritage Resource Centre
- Terry Reilly – Contract Archivist

Changes for all peoples of the Americas

- Indian(s)… → Indigenous…
  - E.g. Indian women → Indigenous women
  - E.g. Indian architecture → Indigenous architecture

- … of North America etc. → geographical subdivision
  - E.g. Indians of North America → Indigenous peoples—North America
  - E.g. Indians of Mexico → Indigenous peoples—Mexico

Changes for Manitoba peoples only

- “Indians” removed from name
  - E.g. Cree Indians → Cree
- Names added
  - E.g. Swampy Cree
- Names changed
  - E.g. Athapascan Indians → Dene
- “Mythology” removed
  - E.g. Cree mythology → DELETE

Miscellaneous changes and additions

- Added terms, e.g.:
  - Smudging
  - Sentencing circles

- Changed terms, e.g.:
  - Off-reservation boarding schools → Residential schools
  - Tribal government → Band government

Total = Hundreds of changed headings; 120 added headings

Christine Bone & Brett Lougheed, Library of Congress Subject Headings Related to Indigenous Peoples: Changing LCSH for Use in a Canadian Archival Context. Cataloging & Classification Quarterly, Vol. 56, Iss. 1, 2018.

Archives vs. Libraries

- Minimal (or no) standards for subject description vs. Rigorous standards and controlled vocabularies

- Unique records vs. Shared records
  - Most library catalogue records are created by others and imported
  - We contribute our records to others via Worldcat etc., where the standard is expected

Issues for Large Library Systems

- Identifying incoming records requiring attention
  - often in batches of hundreds or thousands at a time
- Changing those records
- Allotting resources, not just once, but for the foreseeable future
- Automated, rather than manual, solutions?
- Externally hosted records that can’t be changed at all

Changing subject headings vs. Adding local subject headings

Changing headings outright	Adding local headings
Con: Abandoning the standard entirely makes your records less valuable to others, e.g. Worldcat	**Pro**: The standard is also retained, so the value of your records is also retained
Pro: “Indian” headings eliminated entirely	**Con**: “Indian” headings still visible to users
Pro: Maintains one term for each concept, the whole purpose of a controlled vocabulary	**Con**: Introduces multiple terms for the same concept, possibly confusing users if not done thoughtfully
Con: Cannot be implemented in records you don’t host yourself	**Pro**: May be able to add to externally hosted records
Con: VERY complex. Affects relationships to other headings, and should adhere to the overall vocabulary structure	**Pro**: Less complex. More freedom to do what you want.

Complexities of changing headings outright (examples)

- Converting "…of North America" etc. to a Geographical subdivision
  - Is there already a geog. subd. in the string? If so, no additional one is created.
    - Indians of North America → Indigenous peoples—North America
    - Indians of North America—Alberta → Indigenous peoples—Alberta
  - Can existing topical subdivisions in the string be subdivided geographically?
    - Indians of North America—Languages →
      Indigenous peoples—North America—Languages
    - Indians of North America—Kinship →
      Indigenous peoples—Kinship—North America
- Authority records (See and See-Also references)
  - Every changed heading must also be changed in its authority record AND in all the authorities in which it appears as a reference.

So which is better? To Change or to Add?

- Ideally, they would be changed outright, either through changes to the standard, or making the changes ourselves. Small libraries may be able to do that now.
- While we're thinking about the complexities of all that in large library systems, we can add Local Subject Headings to improve some of the problems right now.
- U of Manitoba local SH "Indigenous peoples"
- Next: Local SHs for specific groups, e.g. Dene