



## Meeting Notes: Thematic Network on Decolonization of Arctic Library and Archives Metadata (DALAM)

Biennial In-Person Business Meeting Held During the Polar Libraries Colloquy Meeting  
Fram Centre, Tromsø, Norway  
June 10, 2024

14:30 – 15:30 Central European Standard Time

Present: 25 DALAM Members and Polar Libraries Colloquy participants from Canada, Denmark, Finland, Germany, Greenland, Italy, Norway, Sweden, United Kingdom and United States.

1. Meeting began at 14:30 p.m.
2. Christian Salewski (Bremerhaven) updated the group about a presentation about DALAM that he had given at the VdA – Verband deutscher Archivarinnen und Archivare e. V. March 13 – 15, Oldenburg, Germany. He also reported that he had been invited to write a piece about DALAM for the journal [Berliner Archivrundschau](#).
3. Tiina Mäntylä (Rovaniemi City Library/Sami Special Library of Finland) provided an update about activities in Sweden related to Sami collections and user services. This work includes raising the profile of Sámi texts.

Also the website "[Sami collection - whose collection?](#)" reports that the Sami Library and the Sorsele Library are working together on this project. The website quotes members as saying, "that the old classification system SAB, which is used in many Swedish libraries, works poorly to present Sami literature and that the classification system DDK is even worse. Different subjects are divided there, even though they belong together in the Sami culture and knowledge tradition."

NOTE: Discussions are underway with this group about a potential presentation to DALAM in Fall, 2024.

4. Niko T. Partanen (National Library of Finland) and Sandy Campbell (University of Alberta Library) led a whole group discussion of the questions and issues that had been raised by the survey of members in advance of the meeting.

There was lively discussion on many of the topics.

- a. On the correct spelling of Sami, Sámi, or Saami, it was noted that all three are still used. Specifically Sámi (with the accent) seems to be preferred by the Sami Parliament in Finland. Some writers prefer Sami without the accent because it is more simple. Saami has been used most often in academic writings, but is considered to be "old fashioned" by some.
- b. On the question of whether or not there are specific terms in library catalogues that would offend or distress Sámi (expanded to include Inuit in Greenland), no terms other than "Lapp" were cited. However a suggestion was made that the term "Sápmi", which refers to the whole of the traditional Sami territories across Northern Europe should be applied more often.
- c. On the question of whether or not *The Commission to Investigate the Norwegianisation Policy and Injustice against the Sámi and Kvens/Norwegian Finns* [report](#) released June 2023 created any specific recommendations for libraries, archives or museums, no one was aware of any in the document. However, it was suggested that "calls to action" may be the next step and underway now.



## DALAM Business Meeting Notes *continued*

- d. On the question of the status of the Kven people, an earlier session had told us that Sami in Norway are Indigenous people, while Kven, Forest Finns, Romani (an older Northern Romani-speaking population which arrived in the 16th century), Rom (Vlax Romani-speaking groups which have arrived since the 19th century) and Jews are recognized as national minorities. Indigenous people and national minorities have different rights and benefits in the Scandinavian countries, the exact situation varying by the legislation of each country. Not all of the people listed as national minorities are happy with that designation. It was also pointed out that by being grouped together under the banner of “national minorities”, the names of the individual groups are made invisible. In addition to the difference in rights, there has historically been mixing between Sami and Kven populations
- e. There was general discussion about some of the fact that Nordic countries do not have a “date” for the beginning of colonization, in the way that places colonized since the 16th century (eg: North America, South/Central America, Africa, Australia/New Zealand) have a starting point. In Norway, Sweden and Finland decolonization discusses more often the past 200 years of the policy of assimilation.
- f. There was also general discussion about policies related to inappropriate words that occur in the titles of books. The importance of being able to find old, even offensive material, is important so that researchers can research these subjects.
- g. On the question of creating appropriate tags for materials in the Omeka databases that are being developed for DALAM by Sharon Rankin and Robin Desmeules (McGill University) to house our research materials, educational materials, and thesauri or terminology works that have community approval, there was wide ranging discussion.

Questions/comments raised for consideration included:

1. Who will be using the tags?
2. Is there a keyword filter?
3. It is not always clear which groups are being covered by a term that is used as a tag.
4. Does title level discovery outweigh the “badness” of a term? In the opinion of several participants, the answer was “yes” (eg: titles should not be changed). Obscuring the mistakes of the past prevents us from learning from those mistakes and avoiding them in the future.
5. For children’s materials there should be different considerations—eg: not exposing children to offensive language
6. Recognize that where we are today is not an “end state”. In 25 years things will have changed and we will have to revise decisions that we make today.
7. Recognize that all solutions that we propose have liabilities.
8. Instead of creating situations where an offensive term retrieves 0 hits, we should use that search as an opportunity to educate, so if someone searches by an outdated term, we could create systems that “pop up” an educational message.
9. We should follow the option of adding a variety of terms to ensure findability.

5. Next meeting September 18, 2024 - 10:00 a.m. Mountain Time via Zoom

6. Meeting adjourned at 15:30 p.m.

Recorder  
Sandy Campbell, DALAM Secretary