

What's in a Label: Evaluating Library Cataloging Practices

Purpose: To understand the acts of colonization perpetuated by Eurocentric library systems and the responsibility to deconstruct it. The intended audience of this lesson is Museum Studies and School of Information students, or others within the museum and libraries fields.

Recommended Resources:

- Access to the following articles:
 - Elzi, Erin and Katherine M Crowe. “This is the Oppressor’s Language Yet I Need It to Talk to You: Native American Name Authorities at the University of Denver.” In *Ethical Questions in Name Authority Control*, edited by J. Sandburg.
 - Lonetree, Amy. “A Note on Naming” and “Introduction: Native Americans and Museums.” In *Decolonizing Museums: Representing Native America in National and Tribal Museums*. University of North Carolina Press, 2012.
 - King, Lisa. “Introduction: Rhetoric, Sovereignty, and Legibility in Native Museums.” In *Legible Sovereignities: Rhetoric, Representations, and Native American Museums*. Oregon State UP, 2017.
 - Wiggins, Jennifer. “Intellectual Property Rights: a Focus on Photography of Native Americans.” *Nebraska Anthropologist (1: 1996)*, 1-6.
 - Tuck, Eve and K. Wayne Yang, “[Decolonization is Not a Metaphor.](#)” *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society (1:1 2012)*, 1-40.
- Access to the online exhibit ‘[No, not even for a picture](#)’: *Re-examining the Native Midwest and Tribes’ Relationships to the History of Photography*
- Access to [Pohrt collection catalog entries](#) within the Clements catalog

Steps:

- Read selected articles from the above list for context and theoretical grounding.
- Find examples of different naming practices or choices that were made on both the online exhibit and in the catalog. Some starting points:
 - From *No, not even for a picture*: in composing the exhibit we were intentional about our naming choices, but still informed by precedent and within certain parameters. Some possible options:
 - [A Note on Naming](#)
 - Boarding School portraits in “[Views of Assimilation](#)”
 - Dakota War portraits, and especially Cut Nose, in “[Complex Nationalism](#)”
 - From the Pohrt Catalog entries: nearly every entry in this collection has something to debate that relates to one or more issues raised in the above readings. Some possible options:
 - [Photo Div Pohrt STE Ebe.003](#)

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- [Photo Div Pohrt STE Wheeler.029](#)
 - [Photo Div Pohrt CDV WhiJ.027](#)
 - [Photo Div Pohrt CAB Sco.005](#)
- Some attributes to note and discuss:
 - Titles derived from slurs
 - Personal name variants and spelling
 - Multiple Tribes listed, spelling and term variations for individual tribes and how this could affect the ability to find these resources during a broad search of the database and not specifically just within the Pohrt collection.
 - (Mis)information provided via captions and versos; marketing of the photographs
- Rewrite the captions and catalog entries with the goal of forwarding indigenous information and resolving obsolete terminology, either individually or in small groups.
- As a whole group, share the new drafts. Brainstorm new methods and ideas for cataloging, naming, and captioning
- Look at your own (or at a particular, if you are unaffiliated) institution's method(s): How does the institution name, label, and otherwise organize artifacts relating to Native Americans? How could the institution update its methods? What steps could be taken to facilitate that, and how could you effect that?
- Discussion Questions:
 - Why is providing a place for Native people to have their identities properly recorded important? Why hasn't this been done already?
 - Which audience(s) do your re-written examples prioritize? How do captions and catalog entries convey value? How do they present concepts of Native self identity?
 - How did you work with or contextualize any written captions or misinformation on the photographs? How can we use or contextualise derogatory representations or terms in the catalog?
 - What other spaces on campus use previous norms, practices, or methods because of precedents? What ways could they rethink these practices?
 - How do the institutions perpetuate colonialism? In what ways to hierarchal systems of institutions fail in representing indigenous cultures? How can this be resolved?

<p>What catalog entry have you chosen to redraft?</p>	
<p>What are issues you have found in your catalog entry?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Were any derogatory terms used? ● Issues of multiple names being unclear? ● Issues of unspecific tribal affiliation? ● Issues of multiple spellings causing issues to search functions? ● Possible or definite misinformation from versos being unaddressed? <p>Other?</p>
<p>Redraft the caption here.</p>	

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<p>What did you change? Why?</p>	
<p>How does your institution name, label, and otherwise organize artifacts relating to Native Americans?</p>	
<p>How could your institution update its methods?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• • •

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<p>What <i>actionable</i> steps can you take to facilitate that?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • • •
<p>Why is providing a place for Native people to have their identities properly recorded important?</p>	
<p>Why hasn't this been done already?</p>	
<p>Which audience(s) do your re-written examples prioritize? How do captions and catalog entries convey value?</p>	

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<p>How did you work with or contextualize any written captions or misinformation on the photographs? How can we use or contextualise derogatory representations or terms in the catalog?</p>	
<p>What other spaces on campus use previous norms, practices, or methods because of precedents?</p>	
<p>What ways could they rethink these practices?</p>	
<p>How do the institutions we work in perpetuate colonialism?</p>	

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