Cataloguing Committee - Decolonizing Description
Summary Report - November 6, 2020

Background

At the Spring 2019 Sitka Business Function Group (SBFG) meeting, in response to recommendations of the CFLA-FCAB Truth and Reconciliation Report, we began discussions to explore decolonizing description in Sitka's shared database.

In advance of the November 2019 SBFG, a detailed survey was sent to all Sitka libraries, with 52 people responding. The results of the survey were shared with member libraries in advance of the November 2019 BFG, where there was opportunity on the agenda for discussion about the survey results. A recommendation stemming from that discussion was to create an ad hoc Cataloguing Committee to more fully investigate options to decolonize description in Sitka's Evergreen.

28 people from a range of libraries using Sitka's Evergreen responded to the call for volunteers for this committee. The Committee met for the first time on February 5, 2020 and a second meeting was held on March 5, 2020. A third meeting planned for April 1, 2020 was cancelled due to Covid-19 library closures.

From April-June, as a result of considerable uncertainty during Covid-19 closures, only a few Committee members indicated they could be available to continue work on the committee, so work was placed on hold. In June, several individuals indicated that they were available to resume work on the Committee, so meetings via video conference were held on July 23, August 26 and November 6.

Composition of Committee

Sitka's Evergreen consortium includes 95 multitype library systems in over 170 locations in two provinces, located on the unceded territories or treaty areas of over 200 First Nations.

The draft [Terms of Reference](#) were reviewed and revised in the February 5, 2020 meeting and approved at the March 4, 2020 Committee meeting. (*Note that some revision will be required going forward, as the timelines specified have been extended).*

The Terms of Reference provided guidelines for the composition of the Committee. While the Committee started with approximately 28 members, the numbers reduced significantly at recent meetings, due to Covid-19 impacts. While full representation was not possible at all meetings, most meetings had at least one representative from Sitka's key stakeholder groups: BC, Manitoba, public library, academic library, government/special library and those who self-identified as Indigenous or First Nations.

Key [Resources](#)
Several key resources were identified by the Committee and used to inform discussions.

Focus of discussions to date
Based on Sitka BFG Fall 2020 survey results and agreement on the February 2020 call, the area of greatest interest was Subject Headings, and specifically, addressing use of the term "Indians'' in subject headings. While this was the primary focus of discussion for most meetings, there was also discussion about the names of First Nations, orthography and classification and reclassification.

Key discussion points
- Use of subject heading ''Indians of North America'' and discussion of alternatives, review of other library and archive organization changes and policies
  - Indian Act and ''Indian'' as a legal term in Canada (i.e. of particular concern and a requirement for Manitoba Legislative Library and their users)
  - Acknowledgement of use of term ''Indian'' by Indigenous people when searching the catalogue
  - LCSH and CSH terminology and hierarchies
- Improving discovery of resources by and about Indigenous people by using additional subject headings
- Calling Indigenous people by their preferred name, using names that Indigenous or First Nations people call themselves, i.e. not anglicized versions; addressing terminology that is considered racist

- - Identifying authoritative source(s) for preferred names and orthography
- Orthography, special characters
  - Evergreen is Unicode compliant, so special characters are supported
- Lack of specific recommendations from [Libraries and Archives Canada](#) and lack of access to Canadian Subject Headings (i.e. behind OCLC paywall) to clarify any potential changes LAC may have made to CSH in this area
- Changes libraries can make without impacting data of other Sitka libraries
  - Classification - libraries may change their local call numbers
  - Local subject headings - libraries may add additional headings in 69x $5 <location code>
    - Guidelines required
- Changes that require community consensus
  - Eliminating existing subject headings
  - Maintain existing headings, with potential options including:
    - made invisible but still searchable (not a likely option;
    - moved to local heading or alternative tag
    - denoted as ''non-preferred''
  - Adding additional ''approved'' LCSH or CSH subject headings to improve discovery, e.g. globally adding a broader heading such as ''Indigenous People''
  - Adding ''non-approved'' subject headings, e.g. headings not recognized by LCSH or CSH, such as ''Aboriginal Canadians''

Next steps *(DRAFT - for Committee review)*
- Broader consultation
  - Review/sharing of Summary Report at November SBFG
    - Feedback from SBFG members on Summary Report
    - Survey to Sitka BFG membership
  - Consultation with FN, Indigenous people or Indigenous groups through existing Sitka member partnerships
  - Monitor Council of Prairie and Pacific University Libraries (COPPUL) initiative
- Re-convene meetings of the original larger Sitka Cataloguing Committee
  - Identification of areas of consensus as well as barriers to making change
  - Identification of areas of potential advocacy, e.g. LAC
  - Development of draft recommendations and broad guidelines

- - What can be done in the near-term, e.g. instructions for libraries to add local subject headings and links to resources with preferred names and orthography; instructions for libraries wishing to re-classify and move materials by and about Indigenous People to other DDC or LC areas
    - What needs to wait and why? (re: barriers, advocacy)
  - Development of technical implementation plan in consultation with Sitka staff, e.g. coordination of global changes, changes or additions to Sitka Cataloguing Policy and/or Sitka documentation
  - Co-op supports for cataloguing resources, including:
    - Potential to integrate and maintain Canadian Subject Headings (CSH) into Sitka's Evergreen and/or to create searchable interface for CSH outside of Sitka's Evergreen
    - Maintaining links to specific resources to support cataloguing of resources by/about Indigenous People on Co-op Support web page