Decolonizing Description

Sitka Cataloguing Working Group

3rd Summary Report – April 2024 (DRAFT)

Background

The [1st summary report](#) on the work of the Sitka Cataloguing Working Group and work by Co-op staff was shared with the Sitka Business Function Group in November 2020 and covers the period March 2019-November 2020. The [2nd report](#) summarizes activities, meeting discussions, and additional resources since the 1st report, up to December 2022.

This 3rd report summarizes activities and discussions for the period January 2023-April 2024.

Timeline

2019-2020

- See 1st report, linked above

2021 – 2022

- See the 2nd report, linked above

January 2023-April 2024 update

Goals and work completed for this period:
1. Share updates on the work of the Committee with Sitka members. Accomplished by:
   a. Setting up a [web page with regular updates, resources and progress reports](#) ***DONE (will continue to be updated going forward)***
   b. Sharing the [Statement](#) with Sitka member libraries to share with their patrons and staff ***DONE***
   c. Update members at February 2023 and May 2024 Sitka Business Function Group meetings ***DONE***
2. To test the benefits and risks of scripting recommended changes to subject headings. Accomplished by:
   a. Focusing on two subject headings: "Eskimos" and "Indians of North America"
      i. Eskimos was selected for the first script and testing as it represents a smaller set of headings to review and would help to surface risks, unintended results and required mitigations ***IN PROGRESS***
   b. Development of scripts by Co-op staff ***DONE (refinements ongoing)***
   c. CWG members assisting Co-op Support staff to review changes and identify issues as they test scripts in a testing environment ***IN PROGRESS***
      i. Additional testing and feedback from public library testers ***PENDING***
   d. Continuing refinement of scripting and processes through the test process
3. To improve understanding of how approaches to this work can be decolonized. Accomplished by:
   a. Review of other initiatives and approaches ***CONTINUING***

The Cataloguing Working Group met 6 times during this period, in March, September and October 2023 and in January, February and March 2024.

Discussion topics and work completed in this period included:
1. Our approach: What is decolonized in our approach and what is the role of the guiding statement we shared with libraries? That the work is more than changing a heading, but the critical thinking involved, what guides us to making a decision and how we might decolonize the process.
2. Cataloguing: Cataloguing policy changes, the challenges of decentralized cataloguing and vendor-provided catalogue records

3. Testing process: review of the testing process for scripted changes, refinement of the review process to identify headings to be excluded and unintended side effects.
4. Testing underway: review and feedback from working group members on a test environment with a copy of production
5. Presentation from Brian Stearns, Cataloguing Librarian, University of Alberta on their approach to decolonizing description – Slide Deck

Additional Resources (since December 2022)

- CSH updates related to Indigenous Peoples – updated April 2024
- Announcement of release of the First Nations, Métis, and Inuit – Indigenous Ontology (FNMIIO)
  - First Nations Metis and Inuit Indigenous Ontology spreadsheet

Decisions / Recommendations

From 2021-22:

Non-preferred headings will not be retained (i.e. as searchable, but not visible) in the catalogue.

From 2023-24:
To focus work on recommending subject headings to replace 'Eskimos' and 'Indians of North America -- ", as well as the testing process for scripting changes

Co-op Cataloguing Support Tools

Sample timeline and workflow for Co-op Support to implement any scripted changes arising from recommendations *(Updated timeline will be provided as/when recommendations are made)*

Shareable spreadsheet of terms that are/will be changed, source of update terms, kept up-to-date, similar to interim resource developed by GVPL *(Pending, as decisions are made)*

Updates to Sitka Policy & Best Practices Manual as decisions are made, including any specific procedures and/or resources to support staff at Sitka member libraries *(Pending, as decisions are made)*

Next steps (Pending for 2024)

- Share update at May 2024 Sitka Business Function Group
- Continue testing of Eskimos – Inuit scripting and process
    - Include testers from some public libraries to further refine process and identify issues
    - Based on testing results, make a recommendation regarding scripting of production environment, including timeline and information to libraries and next steps/headings
- Continue to monitor other decolonizing description initiatives, approaches, and alternate ontologies

Acknowledgements