

Museum Data Sovereignty

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github.com/ds3-nyu/museum-data-sovereignty

Indigenous Data Sovereignty

Internationally, questions of ethics and equity, especially in relation to responsible sharing of data across multiple national platforms, are creating a new range of issues for researchers in the science, innovation and cultural heritage sectors. The Indigenous Data Sovereignty movement is at the forefront of asking what data ethics and equity means for Indigenous peoples. This project initiates the process of developing a means for Indigenous peoples to track and find their cultural heritage within museums, archives and libraries nationally and internationally.

NAGPRA

The Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA) is a US federal law intended to address the rights of lineal descendants, Indian Tribes, and Native Hawaiian organizations. Enacted in 1990, NAGPRA requires federal agencies and federally-funded institutions to return Native American cultural items, including human remains, funerary objects, sacred objects, and objects of cultural patrimony.

Part of NAGPRA's reporting mandate requires that institutions publish inventories of all collections containing human remains. These inventories, officially called Notices of Inventory Completion, are published in the Federal Register. "Notices of Intent to Repatriate" must also be published in the Federal Register.

The primary goal of this project was to bring together all available full-text documents of NAGPRA-generated reports.

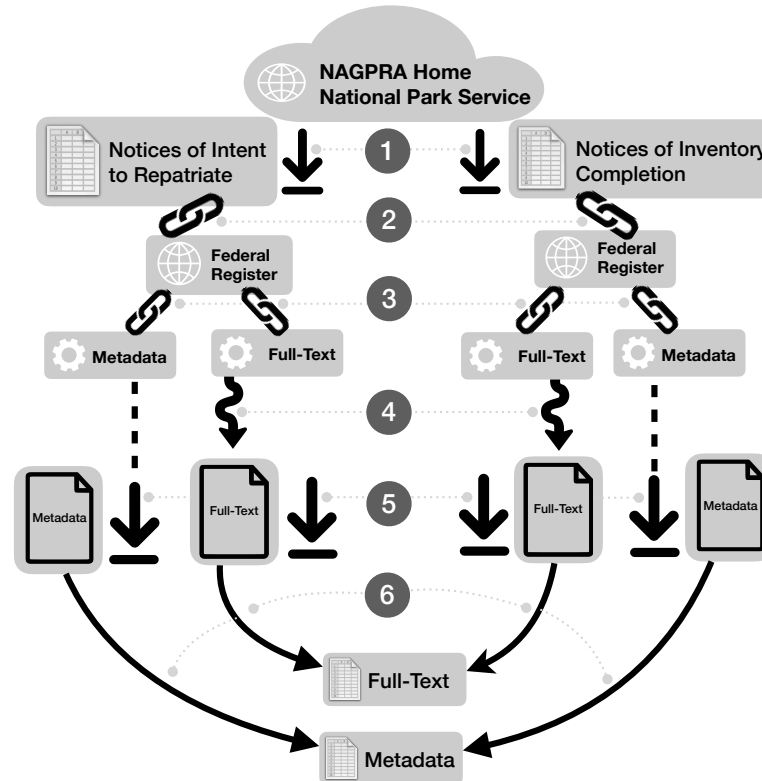
Database Constellation

Eight separately maintained data stores were identified during the initial database-mapping. Three of these were ultimately used to create the dataset.

The new dataset contains 2464 Notices of Inventory Completion and 815 Notices of Intent to Repatriate.

We found ~48,000 records of indigenous communities having received NAGPRA summaries from institutions, but full-text records of these summaries was not available. We also found ~15,000 records of human remains reported under NAGPRA which have not been listed in a notice of inventory completion.

Building the NAGPRA Datasets



- 1 Download master-list tables from NPS page-source.
- 2 For each record, follow link to Federal Register notice page.
- 3 Extract API links from HTML.
- 4 Parse full-text documents.
- 5 For each record, download one JSON file with metadata, and one JSON file with full-text.
- 6 Collect all records. Store all metadata together, and all full-text together.

Ontology Findings

- Data profiling revealed unexpected text-recycling in the Notices of Inventory Completion and Notices of Intent to Repatriate.
- Several institutions seem to be high frequency recyclers. Wisconsin Historical Society and The Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology stand out in particular.
- Similar and repeated language in non-identical entries of like sections suggests reliance on the notice templates provided by NPS.
- NPS templates could be used to build a "sieve" through which the NAGPRA data could be strained, to uncover institution-level differences in language and reporting.

Controlled Vocabulary Results

Number of Total Documents	Number of Notices of Inventory Completion	Number of Notices of Intent to Repatriate	Sample Inventory Context
75	61	14	100-500 burial mound that was damaged by trenching in 1917

