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March 5th, 2023.

Analysis of Peer Aspirant Policies

Graphical user interface, website

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Image 1. Website landing page <https://sipnuuk.karuk.us/digital-heritage>

Sípnuuk (Storage Basket in Karuk) is a Digital Library, Archives, and Museum that began in 2012 as a place for the indigenous people of Karuk in California, US to preserve their cultural heritage, decolonize the biased depictions and interpretations of their culture, and to embrace the right of self-determinism without Eurocentric established cultural systems. This effort is a part of a larger Indigenous movement to reclaim stolen items of great cultural importance and for gaining power of self-determinism within their rightful lands and artifact curation systems: “The questions, concerns, and needs for more culturally responsive information management systems are not few and represent real challenges for Indigenous peoples.” (Hillman et al 2017:302)

The scope of this project covered both physical and digital items ranging from ceremonial to oral histories that show the effort taken to preserve the Karuk region’s historic and contemporary cultural heritage, ecological knowledge, and food systems. The digital system itself was first used to transform food security conscious items such as established literature and indigenous projects on the topic into digital data that could be preserved and accessed by select members. To medicate Western influence, Adrienne Harling, a local non-Native professional librarian, and archivist, was supervised and provided with tribal oversight by the Karuk director of the Department of Natural Resources, Leaf Hillman. (Hillman et al 2017:303) A council was also established to provide a broad range of input from all areas of Kuruk society, Sípnuuk Advisory Committee (SAC).

Graphical user interface, text, application, chat or text message

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Image 2. https://sipnuuk.karuk.us/digital-heritage

Concerning the creation, ingestion, and reuse of data, the Sípnuuk project had to address issues surrounding authorship, outside researcher’s use and creation of raw data and self-education around cultural and intellectual property rights. Western laws do not simply disappear when a decision is made to build a system separate from it. Copyright laws still needed to be addressed in the policy protocols with proper legal counsel before being approved by the Karuk Tribal Council. (304)

This project shows the dualling binary present in copyright that indigenous people must contend with. In one sense it is a significant barrier to gaining the right to self-determination and control over their cultural and intellectual property. In the other, they must adapt and use copyright law to construct their own barrier against Western interference and legislative action. This adaptation becomes an impossibility in one major way, who has access to what ancestral and ceremonial information. “*For example, traditional Karuk laws differentiate between men’s and women’s knowledge around specific traditional protocols. Also, information about specific locations can be culturally sensitive and protected by certain families and/or qualified people.”*  It is because of these oppositional needs that the Sípnuuk project uses the CMS Mukutu’s protocol feature to customize their own system to the tribe’s needs and still accomplish the needed adaptation to Western copyright laws: *By placing copyrighted items in a protocol that requires password protection, we can provide our registered site users a means for fair use. “(*307)

Another challenge that has emerged is the high barriers to become a staff member or manager of the digital archive which includes, again, westernized established systems that require graduate degrees in the specialized field of archival and library management. The critical need for the digital system’s managers and qualified staff to have appropriate cultural knowledge, qualifications, and oversight in addition having strong relationships within the tribal community creates a great responsibility and a hard position to take on let alone be accepted.

**IKMS**

The Indigenous Knowledge Management System (IKMS) is a digital preservation system developed by the South African Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) in collaboration with Indigenous communities. The system is designed to enable Indigenous communities to store and share their knowledge digitally while maintaining control over who can access and gives indigenous communities the choice to share their knowledge with other communities or with researchers. However, Balogun and Kalusopa point out two major issues that have emerged in the systems being created in South African for Indigenous communities, metadata standardization and the lack of adequate backup systems. These issues are very important needs to be addressed because what has been created is vital to the survival of indigenous knowledge in the future.

The scope of the IKMS specifically is to provide a platform for the preservation and management of Indigenous knowledge related to agriculture, medicine, ecology, spirituality, and other areas of importance to Indigenous communities. The system also includes tools for monitoring and evaluating the use and impact of the knowledge, as well as for assessing the quality of the data. IKMS includes a range of features, such as multimedia capabilities, language translation tools, and community feedback mechanisms, that the community can use to education themselves and learn the systems needs for system longevity and to lead future improvements and what Balogun and Kalusopa emphasis is a percussion that must be taken, “Disaster planning.” (Balogun and Kalusopa 2021:182)

The discussion around the creation, ingestion, use, and reuse of data for the Indigenous Knowledge Management System (IKMS) is centered on a few key issues related to the preservation and management of Indigenous knowledge in South Africa.

One of the main challenges in creating IKMS is ensuring that the knowledge is accurately documented and recorded in a way that respects the cultural protocols and values of many different and diverse Indigenous communities. This requires close collaboration between the communities and the developers of the system, as well as a deep understanding of the community's knowledge systems and practices which has led to community training initiatives. This respect for communities wishes and values is an issue that the National Policy of Digitization and the 2004 IKS policy did not address adequately and has caused tension concerning use and reuse of data once it has been added to an Indigenous knowledge digital system. (Balogun and Kalusopa 2021:184)

Another important issue in the discussion around the IKMS is the need to balance the preservation of traditional knowledge with the need for innovation and development. This requires careful consideration of how the knowledge can be used to support sustainable development while also preserving the community's cultural heritage Balogun and Kalusopa respond to these issues with a framework the encourage to be adapted by IKMS and the many other policies that concern indigenous cultural heritage preservation in digitized systems and repositories. .Diagram

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Image 3. Their proposed framework (Balogun and Kalusopa 2021:187)

**Ara Irititja**



Image 4. Website dashboard. <https://irititja.com/>

Ara Irititja is a digital repatriation project that was initiated in 1994 by the Pitjantjatjara and Yankunytjatjara people of Central Australia, in collaboration with the South Australian Museum and other cultural institutions. The project aims to digitally repatriate and preserve historical materials, including photographs, audio recordings, and documents, that relate to the Pitjantjatjara and Yankunytjatjara people and their culture. The name "Ara Irititja" means "stories from a long time ago" in Pitjantjatjara and Yankunytjatjara languages. The project the created a database and digital archive primarily accessible to members of the Pitjantjatjara and Yankunytjatjara communities.

The scope of the Ara Irititja project includes digitization of historical materials such as photographs, audio recordings, and documents that relate to the history and culture of the Pitjantjatjara and Yankunytjatjara people; Preservation of cultural heritage by ensuring that historical materials are preserved and accessible for future generations; Repatriation of cultural materials that have been taken from the Pitjantjatjara and Yankunytjatjara people in the past. This includes the return of photographs and other materials from museums and other institutions. Community engagement and collaboration with the Pitjantjatjara and Yankunytjatjara communities. The project includes community training and education programs, as well as opportunities for community members to contribute to the digitization and cataloging of historical materials. (Christian 2006:56-57)

The discussion surrounding Ara Irititja creation, ingestion, use, and reuse of data is centered around the importance of respecting Indigenous cultural protocols and knowledge systems when managing and sharing digital cultural heritage materials. Some key topics that have been at the center of aboriginal digital curated systems is including and creating culturally sensitive metadata that provides better context to the digital artifacts that is then protected from outside influence and access. Ara Irititja also involves many ethical considerations. These include issues such as the protection of cultural heritage, the rights of Indigenous peoples to control their own data and freedom of self-determinization, and the need to ensure that the data is used in ways that respect Indigenous knowledge and cultural protocols. (Christian 2006:58)

There are sadly some difficult challenges to overcome for both the communities and the individuals working to repatriate and digitally preserve indigenous knowledge through a system like Ara Irititja. One major challenge that has emerged is a language barrier in many of the historical materials because the languages of these material are no longer spoken by community members due to oppression and the stolen generation period, which can make it difficult to interpret and understand the materials. There is also a concern around the technology needed to create, curate, and control this system in remote areas that do not support internet connectivity or only have severely limited access.

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