

Two Row Model of Building Archival Collections: An Indigenous Information Policy Perspective

(Paper Proposal)

Abstract:

This current 6,500 word paper addresses the Two Row Wampum as a policy model for archival collections. This paper and subsequent presentation will provide an overview of mainstream archival practices and how they are utilized in First Nation communities, and special libraries collecting or holding Indigenous materials. This paper is intended to be both practical and theoretical as the questions and points made are a tableau or road map of query. Additionally, this paper provides literature support in the form of arguments from some of the leading Indigenous Researchers, albeit outside of the field of Information Sciences.

This paper will address the three A's of archival work identified by Cuervo (2015): Appraisal, Acquisition, Access. Added to this is a fourth: Action, taken on by those Information Scientists who practice social justice throughout their librarianship. This is addressed throughout several sections including one on decolonizing the library and archive, content management and integrated library system software, the impacts of recent campaigns on social justice action of librarians such as the Idle No More and Murdered and Missing Indigenous Women (and Girls), and Empowering Others.

This paper concludes with a recommendation of policy which embraces the arguments made within the text, framing it within the Two Row Wampum. While a specifically Indigenous argument, this paper clearly has a home within the *Diverging Trajectories in Information Science* theme for 2020.

A list of section headings are below with a number of excerpts from these sections.

Headings:

Two Row Wampum's Historical Content

[Excerpt] When European settlers came to the Haudenosaunee (Iroquois Confederacy) territory, it was recorded in wampum that we could both co-navigate the same river, traveling in the same direction, but the Haudenosaunee could do so in their canoe and the Europeans could do so in theirs. In short, this is a metaphorical policy of non-interference that is intrinsic to the Two Row Wampum. In modernity, people who try to live with both Indigenous and Western world-views are described as having a foot in each canoe. One can imagine that if anyone were to stand in two different canoes simultaneously, the impossibility of the task would become rapidly evident when the passenger capsizes. Non-interference is just that, choosing and living in one canoe.

Using the Two Row Wampum as an Information Policy document, I intend to investigate Indigenous examples of archival policy including appraisal, acquisition, and access. The aim of

this paper is to assist the Indigenous library/archives to create policy that will guide both of the canoes that we must paddle along the proverbial river of collection.

Introduction to the Problem

Indigenous Knowledge and Publication

Definition of the Archivist

Determining Enduring Value

[*Excerpt*] Cuervo states, “archival appraisal requires the archivist or librarian to discern the enduring value of a collection, consider its content, societal segment it represents, and decide how these considerations fit within an archival program” (2015, 267). Schwartz and Cook (2002) go further by identifying that the archive influences what and how future users will learn of our communities today. As a consensus builder, let us agree that the ultimate goal of any (First Nation) archive is to build a collection with Enduring Value. Not only should we want the individual items to have an enduring value, but also a collection that holds content that will be of value as a whole. Based on the premise of value as both item and collection, we must define and determine enduring value before we can determine how an archivist can set a standard of acquisition that will meet this end.

Cuervo (2015) identifies three interpretations of value. The first is *Evidential or Historic Value*, which are those that provide details to specific event or activity or details of eras. One document, such as an image, may be both evidentiary and historic dependent on the use. The image may document an event such as a community picnic, while being historic by providing a snapshot of dress and gender relationships. Secondly, *Informational Value* is the key information held within a document; for example, a death certificate that includes family information has value as a genealogical resource. Finally, an item with enduring value should have *Intrinsic Value*. These one-of-a-kind items are unique and rare, or are of significance to the community from which they originate or describe. I would argue these are items that one knows when see, and are not requiring skill to identify their significance. In addition to the three interpretations (Cuervo 2015), one should also consider if an item has a *Continuing Usefulness*. In a digital archive, we must contemplate if the item has usefulness at the time of acquisition, in addition to whether there is belief it will have expected ongoing usefulness.

Indigenous Appraisal

Indigenous Acquisition

Indigenous Access

Following the Lead of Decolonizing the Academy

Decolonizing the Library Archives

Riding the Grass Roots Indigenous Movement

Empowering Others to Act

Exemplars of the Balance between Acquisition and Access

Two Row Model as Information Policy for Collections Management

Although a Two Row methodology states we must have different paths for our traditional peoples and our Canadian counterparts; one must continue to question what role the librarian/archivist has if they in fact must maintain the western archive of records and files, newspapers and images, while working to keep the original canoe filled with our language, stories, teaching, and lived experience. In short, the staff person is asked to fill two ever-moving vessels with the needed materials for all community members. Hunt states, “Indigeneity is not just an idea. It is not just words on a screen, theorizations, discourse analysis or a series of case studies. Indigeneity is also lived, practiced, and relational” (In McMahon et al 2015, 29). Given

this statement and the role the library archivist must play for their community, the ongoing struggle of Indigeneity is a clear function of the job description, as is social change agent.

I would argue that the public librarian who serves as local archivist must stay true to the needs of both canoes but do so at different points. This is not a straddling of the two canoes with a danger of capsizing when the rapids strike; rather it is akin to a delicate dance of balance and awareness of public librarianship and Indigenous librarian/archivist. Much like a woman must balance herself between the roles of daughter, wife, mother, I believe we can be more than one thing at one time, while still being true to the needs of each vessel, and, most importantly, being true to the values of each.

In the Two Row Model of building and managing archival collections, we must follow the 4A's as a profession of Indigenous librarian/archivists working to determine and then meet the needs of our community. In *Appraisal*, we must of course identify enduring value, but also complete a gap analysis of what community needs exist but are not available in any current format. We must consider what might be lost in the next generation (or even next year) and create an acquisition plan accordingly. We must work with respect and dignity to realize the preservation of community needs in *Acquisition* as we build agreements and new paths forward with our Indigenous Knowledge leaders. We must build *Access* models via technology of ILS/CMS including standards and criteria for internal and external access to Indigenous and Community knowledge. Finally, we must fill the gap identified in appraisal by completing the *Action Research* of videography of oral history, or whichever primary collection needs are identified within the libraries community Indigenous Knowledge acquisition plan.

Henderson addressed concepts indicative to the Two Row as information policy consideration when he stated that Indigenous researchers must take part in the decolonization of the academy and western institutions from within and without.

[The colonized] have to share Eurocentric thought and discourse with their oppressors; however, to exist with dignity and integrity, they must renounce Eurocentric models and live with the ambiguity of thinking against themselves. They must learn to create models to help them take their bearings in unexplored territory. Educated Aboriginal thinkers have to understand and reconsider Eurocentric discourse in order to reinvent an Aboriginal discourse based on heritage and language and to develop new postcolonial synthesis of knowledge and law to protect them from old and new dominators and oppressors (Henderson 2000, 249-250).

In an era of activist energy and political decolonization, we have seen many figures rise to take a stand: faculty and educators; lobbyists and traditional activists; elected and traditional leaders; and legal and social services staff. Although the librarian has been doing the work quietly from their building, or online scouring archives internationally, it is time for the field to arise as the agents of social change we recognize that we are, teaching others what roles we fill and will continue to act in the preservation of our heritage and in the community building we so desperately need.

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