

# Centering Indigenous Perspectives in Library Collections: A Collaborative Approach to Cultural Humility

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## Abstract

After Indigenous students at the University of Nevada, Reno brought concerns about the monographs collections to the attention of Library and Archives staff, we set out to determine how we might center Indigenous perspectives in circulating and special collections. We conducted a mixed methods study through a collections analysis and a focus group with Indigenous students and alumnae. Originally conceived as a participatory action research project, we modified the study design as we became more aware of our own positionality and the extent to which historical traumas, deeply embedded colonialism, and whiteness impacted a participatory project. Results indicate that our Indigenous collections are old and problematic; and that the library and special collections were largely inaccessible to our participants due to a lack of awareness about library discovery, a lack of relevant materials, or due to deeply embedded colonial structures. Additionally, this study highlights the importance of cultural humility for library and archives professionals.

## About the authors:

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*Kimberly Anderson* has a doctorate in Information Studies and an MLIS with an emphasis in archival studies, both from UCLA. Her journey with reflective archival practice began at Northern Arizona University where she first learned about culturally-responsive stewardship in non-tribal archives. She currently leads the special collections and university archives department and is working on a project to align the archives with the Protocols for Native American Archival Materials. The majority of historical monographs are located within the archives and special collections.

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