

DOCUMENTING ENVIRONMENTAL AND NATURAL HISTORY

The Role of Archivists in Stewarding Archives, Specimens, and Data in Settler Institutions

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A PROBLEM WITHIN A PROBLEM WITHIN A PROBLEM...

WE START WITH THE ACKNOWLEDGMENT THAT SCIENCE AND SCIENTIFIC RECORDS AND DATA ARE NOT NEUTRAL, THEY ARE OFTEN CREATED BY COLONIAL/SETTLER PRACTICES.

ARCHIVES ARE ALSO NOT NEUTRAL; THEY ARE EXTENSIONS OF COLONIAL/SETTLER INSTITUTIONS.

HOW SHOULD ARCHIVISTS WORK WITH SCIENTIFIC RECORDS AND DATA IN ARCHIVES IN THIS PROBLEM SPACE?



QUESTIONS AROUND SCIENTIFIC DATA

- What is the history of scientific data collecting in archives, particularly focused on the environment and natural history?
- How do we reconcile different disciplinary and institutional practices for preserving and creating access to data? (e.g., museums, research centers and laboratories keeping data)
- Why is it important for archives be involved in the stewardship of data?

CONFRONTING COLONIALISM WITHIN AND THROUGH ARCHIVES

If we recognize the role archives have in shaping narratives and promulgating the settler institution, how does the context that archives provide continue the colonial and extractive histories of scientific data and those who collected the data?

LAND-GRAB UNIVERSITIES

Land-Grab Universities

A *High Country News* Investigation

By Robert Lee, Tristan Ahtone, Margaret Pearce, Kalen Goodluck, Geoff McGhee, Cody Leff, Katherine Lanpher and Taryn Salinas.

Overview

Universities

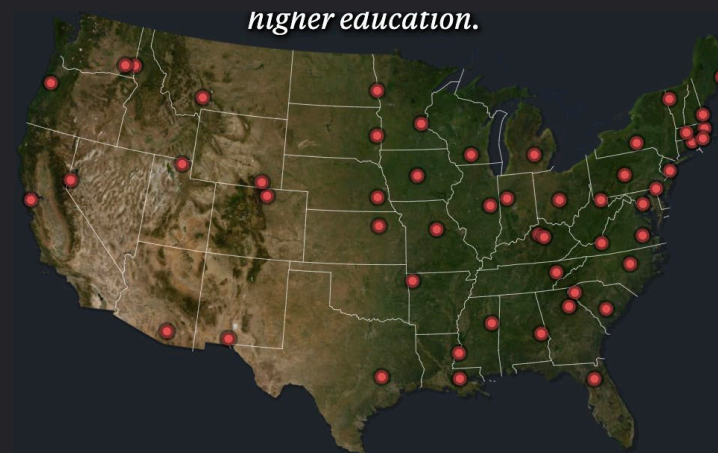
Tribal Nations

Lands

Stories

ABOUT THIS PROJECT | CREDITS | FEEDBACK

How the United States funded land-grant universities with expropriated Indigenous land.



higher education.

*The United States took the **land that supplied the grants** from nearly 250 tribal nations, through 162 treaties or seizures.*

RETHINKING DESCRIPTION AND ACCESS

In what ways can archivists begin rethinking how to describe these histories of collecting, extraction, decontextualization, and recordkeeping in university archives and provide more honest, accurate, and transparent access to these materials?

INSTITUTIONAL CONTEXTS: MINNESOTA AND ILLINOIS

- University of Minnesota, Twin Cities, established in 1851 and designated a land-grant institution in 1868
- 1872 state law establishes the university's Minnesota Geological and Natural History Survey & to provide a public museum for the display of specimens
- Survey is financed through the sale of lands ceded by Tribal Nations through coercion 20 years before
- UMN operates biological & forestry research stations nearby or adjacent to Ojibwe Reservations
- 1956 Indian Relocation Act results in neighborhoods near the university becoming one of the most densely populated urban areas of Native Peoples
- Archives hold scientific records and data in a facility above the Haha Wakpa or Misi-ziibi (Mississippi River) that document institutional influence
- University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign, established in 1867 as a science and technology-intensive university
- Five state scientific surveys (Natural History Survey, Geological Survey, Water Survey, Archaeological Survey)
- Interdisciplinary science departments, research institutes, and laboratories
- State-wide extension service established following Smith-Lever Act of 1914
- Natural history and environmental records and data documenting ecology, plant and animal specimens in Illinois and from around the world
- Missing are Indigenous knowledge and perspectives, acknowledgement of racist and discriminatory contexts of scientific research



THANK YOU! QUESTIONS?

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