

Medical Archives and their Complicated Pasts: An Exploratory Study on the Historical Connections of Medical Archives, Libraries and Racial Science

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Abstract:

For over a millennium, archival and library workers have advanced knowledge of human science by building, preserving and sharing collections and research. Historically, libraries and archives have aligned their institutional responsibilities to adhere to and support the values and virtues of oppressive and colonial practices. The archives and records have revealed such troubling and complicated past institutional knowledge-building presented by scholarships in historical anthropology and the history of medicine. Library and archival histories have also revealed the ongoing mistreatments and denials of information access to marginalized groups. The history of libraries and archives in the health and medical sciences reveal how these institutions and their workers have preserved research collections through exploitation and oppression. By exploring the history of medicine through this lens, the poster presentation highlights how such institutions have been complicit in upholding white supremacy values and racial science knowledge. The poster presentation showcases historical documents and archival collections that have been collected and preserved, particularly records and data of vulnerable groups, to advance the knowledge and understanding of the human body through racial science. The poster presentation also highlights the ethics, dilemmas and practices in teaching medical archives containing complicated content and materials.

About the author:

Raymond Pun (he/him) is an Education/Outreach Manager at the Hoover Institution Library & Archives, Stanford University. His current research interests focus on the history of medical archives and libraries. Along with Laurie Bridges and Roberto Arteaga, Ray is the co-editor of *Wikipedia and Academic Libraries: A Global Project* (forthcoming Fall 2021 by Maize Books, an imprint of Michigan Publishing).