

Opening Archives: Respectful Repatriation

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Abstract

In the last twenty years, many collecting institutions have heeded the calls by indigenous activists to integrate indigenous models and knowledge into mainstream practices. The digital terrain poses both possibilities and problems for indigenous peoples as they seek to manage, revive, circulate, and create new cultural heritage within overlapping colonial/postcolonial histories and oftentimes-binary public debates about access in a digital age. While digital technologies allow for items to be repatriated quickly, circulated widely, and annotated endlessly, these same technologies pose challenges to some indigenous communities who wish to add their expert voices to public collections and also maintain some traditional cultural protocols for the viewing, circulation, and reproduction of some materials. This case study examines one collaborative archival project aimed at digitally repatriating and reciprocally curating cultural heritage materials of the Plateau tribes in the Pacific Northwest.

I'm an accidental archivist. As a cultural anthropologist and ethnographer working with the Warumungu Aboriginal community in Central Australia and several Native American nations in the Pacific Northwest of the United States, my work has nonetheless increasingly focused on integrating newly repatriated objects—in their digital form—into existing community practices, traditions, and contemporary cultural production through the creation of digital archives. For example, after an influx of digital materials from researchers, teachers, and missionaries to the Nyinkka Nyunyu Art and Culture Centre, I worked with Warumungu staff to identify processes for managing these new digital materials.¹ Specifically, after testing several other commercial

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¹ See Nyinkka Nyunyu Art and Culture Centre, <http://www.nyinkkanyunyu.com.au>, accessed 26 September 2010. See also Kimberly Christen, "Following the Nyinkka: Relations of Respect and Obligations to Act in the Collaborative Work of Aboriginal Cultural Centers," *Museum Anthropology* 30, no. 2 (2007): 101–24.

off-the-shelf products, we discovered a blind spot in most content management systems: They do not provide granular levels of access for various types of users, nor a way to customize protocols for access based on cultural parameters. Community leaders at Nyinkka Nyunyu wanted a digital archive that provided them with a content management system based on their own dynamic cultural protocols for the viewing, circulation, and reproduction of cultural materials and knowledge. Working in collaboration with software designers, in 2007, after two years of production, we launched the Mukurtu Wumpurrarni-kari Archive.² The Archive allows Warumungu people to define the terms of access to and distribution of their cultural materials through an interface that links each community member to each piece of content via an extensive user profile and a rich content-tagging upload process. For example, a piece of content uploaded by an individual may be designated for women only. Or, an image of a male initiation ceremony returned from a national museum may be eligible for viewing by elder men only. The permutations of types of access are unlimited, dynamic, and in constant negotiation, just as they are offline.³ Within the archive, the process of defining item-level sharing protocols results in a unique “mini-archive” for each individual member of the community. Records from national archives, local community documents, and individual family photos make up the eclectic and dynamic mixture of materials in the Mukurtu Wumpurrarni-kari Archive available to community members at the Nyinkka Nyunyu Art and Culture Centre, but not online to the general public. Projects like the Mukurtu Wumpurrarni-kari Archive proliferate globally as indigenous communities play active roles in repatriation projects, merging digital repatriation with the physical return of objects. Varied indigenous needs, specific historic and contemporary situations, intersecting technical and cultural needs of individual communities, and the distinctiveness of the collections all combine to produce projects with foci including language preservation and revitalization, the creation of new curatorial models, the production of contemporary commercial and noncommercial products, and

² For more history on the project and to access an online demo, see the project website at <http://www.mukurtuarchive.org>, accessed 24 August 2010, and for a detailed description of the archive features and goals, see Kimberly Christen, “Archival Challenges and Digital Solutions in Aboriginal Australia,” *SAA Archaeological Recorder* 8, no. 2 (2008): 21–24.

³ For more of the dynamism of Warumungu cultural protocols and negotiation processes in relation to the circulation of cultural materials and knowledge, see Kimberly Christen, “Tracking Properness: Repacking Culture in a Remote Australian Town,” *Cultural Anthropology* 21, no. 3 (2006): 416–46.

the revitalization and circulation of traditional practices and performances.⁴ These diverse projects, needs, and outcomes present scholars with a rich landscape to explore digital repatriation as the intersection of archival interests, indigenous information management systems, archival standards, and divergent notions of access and privacy.

Digital Repatriation: Access and Accountability

Digital technologies alter repatriation practices by allowing low-cost surrogates of cultural heritage materials to be returned to source communities. While scholars across many disciplines have focused on the ethical, legal, and political ramifications of physical repatriation, other forms of repatriation have been largely viewed as an extension of physical repatriation, or ignored altogether. However, the specificity of digital resources—the ease with which they can be copied, distributed, and revised; their ability to exist in multiple locations at once; and their ephemeral nature—makes them distinct cultural objects that provide scholars with a rich platform for engaging with varied processes of cultural production and multiple routes for the circulation of knowledge. Digital repatriation can be a contentious term if one makes too-quick assumptions about the relationship between the digital and material forms of cultural heritage materials. While some may assume on first glance that the digital object—as a surrogate—is meant to *replace* the physical object, no one, standard definition, nor agreed-upon terminology, characterizes the multiple practices of collecting institutions, individuals, or local community groups surrounding the return of cultural and historical materials to indigenous communities in their digital form. Digital surrogates are not intended to be replacements for, or synonymous with, the physical materials they may represent. Instead, digital (or digitized) cultural materials provide an alternative form of and dynamic life for many physical objects. These newly digitized and repatriated materials may stimulate linguistic or cultural revivals, spur contention and disagreement, prompt new cultural forms or popular products, incite new collaborations, and/or forge new types of performances or artistic creations. In every case, however, these materials are inserted into overlapping understandings of access and preservation.

⁴ See Joshua Bell, “Looking to See: Reflections on Visual Repatriation in the Purari Delta Gulf Province, Papua New Guinea,” in *Museums and Source Communities: A Routledge Reader*, ed. Laura Peers and Alison Brown (London: Routledge, 2003), 111–22; Aron Crowell, “Sharing Knowledge in Alaska: Smithsonian Collections Come Home,” paper presented at the American Anthropological Association, Philadelphia, Penn., 4 December 2009; Haidy Geismar, “Photography Changes Who Gets to See Images of Us,” *Click! Photography Changes Everything*, Smithsonian Photography Initiative (2009), <http://click.si.edu/Story.aspx?story=530>, accessed 10 December 2009; Kate Hennessey, “Virtual Repatriation and Digital Cultural Heritage,” *Anthropology News* (April 2009): 5–6; Patrick Moore and Kate Hennessey, “New Technologies and Contested Ideologies: The Tagish First Voices Project,” *American Indian Quarterly* 30, nos. 1 and 2 (2006): 119–37; and Ruth Phillips, “Replacing Objects: Historical Practices for the Second Museum Age,” *Canadian Historical Review* 86, no. 1 (2005): 83–110.

Archivists are especially attuned to the nuances of archival materials as they seek to make resources available to multiple publics whose interests often diverge. Issues of access are paramount to archivists as they seek to make collections available in both physical and digital forms. While access has generally been a central concern to the field, over the last five years, American archivists have explicitly grappled with the “Protocols for Native American Archival Materials,” a multi-authored document expressly asking collecting institutions and their institutional representative organizations to engage with the particular concerns of Native American peoples as they relate to the collection, reproduction, and curation of and access to their cultural materials held by private and public institutions.⁵ The protocols reflect a set of guidelines—not specific rules or regulations—that, if adopted by archivists, *could* alter their relationships with both Native communities and the materials in their possession as the protocols invite a rethinking of some basic parameters of and foundations for the field.

Archivists are in the thick of discussions about providing access to materials within their repositories to diverse publics generally and through digital repatriation projects more specifically. Within these debates, archivists have proven to be thoughtful and open in their engagement with indigenous communities concerning issues of access to intangible cultural heritage. Archivists have engaged with individual communities on specific, one-time digital repatriation projects that provide layered access or prompt cocuration. However, tacit assumptions about professional standards concerning the extent and limitations of access within the “public domain,” the parameters of “open access” in public settings, and the value of, and conditions for, “expert knowledge” in defining collections often hamstring efforts at changes.⁶

⁵ Protocols for Native American Archival Materials, <http://www2.nau.edu/libnap-p/protocols.html>, accessed 1 September 2010.

⁶ Many professional organizations are working to define standards to deal with indigenous materials. The Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act of 1990 in the United States was a defining moment for the legal recognition of tribal control over their cultural materials held in collecting institutions and for bringing the issues of varied types of access into the spotlight to be grappled with openly. See Protocols for Native American Archival Materials; “Charge for the Society of American Archivists Working Group on Cultural Property,” <http://www.archivists.org/council/Council0809/0809-1-II-E-CulturalPropWG.pdf>; and the American Library Association’s website, Traditional Cultural Expressions and Libraries, “Librarianship and Traditional Cultural Expressions: Nurturing Understanding and Respect,” <http://wo.ala.org/tce/>; all accessed 1 September 2010. In addition, international forums such as UNESCO and WIPO have pushed for new terminology, legal provisions, and guidelines for indigenous cultural heritage. See Monika Dommann, “Lost in Tradition? Reconsidering the History of Folklore and its Legal Protection Since 1800,” in *Intellectual Property and Traditional Cultural Expressions in a Digital Environment* (Cheltenham, U.K.: Edward Elger Press, 2008), 3–16; and Wend Wendland, “It’s a Small World (After All): Some Reflections on Intellectual Property and Traditional Cultural Expressions.” See two papers in *Intellectual Property and Traditional Cultural Expressions in a Digital Environment* (Cheltenham, U.K.: Edward Elger Press, 2008), first Monika Dommann, “Lost in Tradition? Reconsidering the History of Folklore and its Legal Protection Since 1800,” 3–16; and Wend Wendland, “It’s a Small World (After All): Some Reflections on Intellectual Property and Traditional Cultural Expressions,” 150–81.

A commonly held understanding of the public good as being equivalent to unabridged access to public domain materials often blinds collecting institutions to non-Western systems of information management and circulation that work from and mobilize different understandings of “public,” “private,” and the like. For example, in the case of the Warumungu community’s Mukurtu Wumpurrarni-kari Archive, access to certain cultural materials (and the knowledge that animates these materials) is decided based on a dynamic system of accountability where one’s age, gender, ritual status, family, and place-based relationships all combine (and recombine as affiliations shift over a lifetime) to produce a continuum of access to materials within the community. This dynamic system tacks back and forth between a fixed—but not static—set of criteria for the distribution, reproduction, and creation of knowledge in both its tangible and intangible forms. Within this system, groups of people continually define access based on a social system and set of cultural protocols that demand responsibility and recognition within the community. The Warumungu system is just one such indigenous system that provides a basis for critiquing and enriching our notion of the public and access. Paying attention to these systems makes it more difficult to maintain a generic sense of the “public”—as a category for information distribution—or “open access”—as a universal goal. Instead, emphasizing these systems highlights how relational networks position and obligate people to interact with and maintain cultural materials and knowledge within their community kin base. Indigenous systems of knowledge production, circulation, and access do not resonate with liberal notions of autonomous subjects acting to attain universal knowledge within a generic public domain of ideas; to the contrary, they stretch the definition of “public” and how it can be imagined.⁷

In fact, the public domain has never been accommodating to indigenous models of knowledge production and circulation. In an overview detailing competing views of the public domain, legal scholar Pamela Samuelson argues for an enriched understanding of the concept of the public domain. She suggests that “The principal advantage of recognizing multiple public domains is that it illuminates a range of important *social values served by these domains* and a plethora

⁷ See Kimberly Christen, “Gone Digital: Aboriginal Remix and the Cultural Commons,” *International Journal of Cultural Property* 12, no. 3 (2005): 315–45; Rosemary Coombe, “Fear, Hope and Longing for the Future of Authorship and a Revitalized Public Domain in Global Regimes of Intellectual Property,” *De Paul Law Review* 52 (2003): 1171–91; James Leach, “Modes of Creativity and the Register of Ownership,” in *CODE: Collaborative Ownership and the Digital Economy*, ed. Rishab Aiyer Ghosh (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2005), 29–44; Fred Myers, “Some Properties of Culture and Persons,” in *CODE*, 45–60; Anthony Seeger, “Who Got Left Out of the Property Grab Again: Oral Traditions, Indigenous Rights, and Valuable Old Knowledge,” in *CODE*, 75–84.

of strategies for preserving them and the values they serve.”⁸ Specifically, she identifies indigenous knowledge systems as one of the sets of values left out or marginalized in most views of the public domain. Indigenous traditional knowledge systems and associated modes of knowledge circulation and access call into question standard notions of the public domain that overwrite histories of exclusion and injustice. Yet, because variations of the public domain are either poorly understood or romantically imagined, indigenous knowledge systems are usually discounted as viable alternatives to, or additions within, a conception of the public domain that allows for a continuum of access strategies.⁹

Indeed, even archivists, librarians, and museum specialists who agree in principle that indigenous knowledge systems and culture-specific protocols undo the logic of the public as an undifferentiated mass often see no way around their professional obligations to make their collections “open” to the “public.” That is, collecting institutions’ core commitment to access predicated upon openness to the public severely limits the possibility of seeing indigenous claims as alternative types of openness (access differently conceived). Oftentimes in these situations, indigenous systems of information management are defined as “cultural values” or “tradition.” In either case, while collecting institutions may be sympathetic to these “concerns,” they do not see them in the same semantic light as the assumed universal claims on which their assertions of a uniform typology for access are based. Paul Dourish and Johanna Brewer suggest that viewing information as a “natural category” rather than as a “cultural category” limits one’s ability to see the processes and relationships that ground information systems within larger cultural logics and historic events.¹⁰ A tacit naturalization of information as a universal category, then, works against recognizing indigenous systems as on par with accepted Western institutional models. At the same time, popular notions of censorship and information lockdown delay imaginative responses to other modes of circulation. When access *as* openness

⁸ My italics. Pamela Samuelson, “Enriching Discourse on Public Domains,” *Duke Law Journal* 55 (2006): 104, Social Science Research Network, <http://ssrn.com/abstract=925052>, accessed 19 February 2010. One of the thirteen conceptions of the public domain she outlines is the “Romantic or Imperialist Public Domain” (p. 138) that does not take into account indigenous traditional knowledge practices and alternative conceptions of property and access (pp. 140–41). See also Brad Sherman and Leanne Wiseman, “Toward an Indigenous Public Domain?,” in *The Future of the Public Domain*, ed. Luice Guibault and Bernt Hugenholtz (Kluwer Law International, 2006), 259–77 and Anupam Chander and Madhavi Sunder, “The Romance of the Public Domain,” *California Law Review* 92 (2004), Social Science Research Network, <http://ssrn.com/abstract=562301>, accessed 1 February 2010.

⁹ See Kathy Bowery and Jane Anderson, “The Politics of Global Information Sharing: Whose Cultural Agendas Are Being Advanced?,” *Social and Legal Studies* 18, no. 4 (2009): 1–26; Chander and Sunder, “The Romance of the Public Domain;” Christen, “Gone Digital,” 315–44; and Rosemary Coombe, “The Expanding Purview of Cultural Properties and Their Politics,” *Annual Review of Law and Social Sciences* 5 (2009): 393–412.

¹⁰ Johanna Brewer and Paul Dourish, “Storyed Spaces: Cultural Accounts of Mobility, Technology, and Environmental Knowing,” *International Journal of Human-Computer Studies* (2008).

is taken for granted as a *de facto* public good, then information management systems based on limiting access often get defined as oppressive. When the contours of access have information freedom at one end and abusive regulatory or political systems at the other, then limiting access can be defined negatively as “censorship.” As Alex Byrne suggests: “Appropriate handling does not mean censorship. It means sensitivity to the contexts in which information agencies operate, the scope of their services and the nature of the communities they serve.”¹¹ In other words, reminding ourselves that censorship itself is practiced within specific political boundaries might help us understand that not every instance of “not seeing” is an abuse of power, but instead a practical implementation of cultural protocols aimed at maintaining specific types of knowledge in a world characterized by human differences. For example, in the Mukurtu Wumpurrarni-kari Archive, access parameters tied to individual items both limit and allow certain types of viewing practices based on gender, ritual status, place-based relations, and so on. However, this is not a discriminatory system in an oppressive sense. Within the Warumungu cultural system, knowledge about places, ancestors, and rituals are dispersed throughout the community, but no one person or group holds all the knowledge. Instead, this is a complementary system in which multiple kin groups must come together to exchange, share, and circulate knowledge lest it fall into disuse and die (not be accessible any longer to contemporary generations).¹²

Many archivists have collaborated with indigenous communities and their institutions on a case-by-case basis, productively sidestepping any need to make or implement a one-size-fits-all set of standards.¹³ In fact, one of the most promising and dynamic sites for collaboration with indigenous communities has been in the process and practice of digital repatriation. In the last twenty years, collecting institutions—museums, libraries, and archives—have heeded the calls by indigenous peoples to integrate indigenous curatorial models and knowledge into mainstream museum and archival practices—from cataloging

¹¹ Alex Byrne, quoted in Elizabeth Edwards, “Talking Visual Histories: Introduction,” in *Museums and Source Communities*, 83–99, quote at p. 95.

¹² Kimberly Christen, *Aboriginal Business: Alliances in a Remote Australian Town* (Santa Fe: School of Advanced Research Press, 2009) and Fred Myers, “Ontologies of the Image and Economics of Exchange,” *American Ethnologist* 31, no. 1 (2004): 5–20.

¹³ For examples, see Ramesh Srinivasan, Jim Enote, Katherine M. Becvar, and Robin Boast, “Critical and Reflective Uses of New Media Technologies in Tribal Museums,” *Museum Management and Curatorship*, forthcoming; Michael Brown, *Who Owns Native Culture?* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2003); Timothy Powell, “A Drum Speaks: A Partnership to Create a Digital Archive Based on Traditional Ojibwe Systems of Knowledge,” *RBM: A Journal of Rare Books, Manuscripts and Cultural Heritage* (2007): 167–79.

descriptions to display modes.¹⁴ With the growth of new digital technologies, archivists, museum professionals, and indigenous communities have collaborated to produce new models for the creation, circulation, and reproduction of knowledge and cultural materials. The recent development of Web 2.0 technologies grounded in user-generated content and bottom-up exhibition and display modes has produced a dynamic platform for sharing materials. Web-based photo-sharing platforms like Flickr, and, more recently, online publishing tools like Omeka, allow people to take advantage of low-cost or no-cost technologies to create exhibits and circulate physical objects in their digital form.¹⁵

This newly animated digital terrain poses both possibilities and problems for indigenous peoples as they seek to manage, revive, circulate, and create new cultural heritage materials and self-representations. While digital technologies allow for materials to be repatriated quickly, circulated widely, and annotated endlessly, these same technologies pose challenges to indigenous communities who wish to maintain traditional cultural protocols for the viewing, circulation, and reproduction of these newly animated and annotated cultural materials. Many indigenous communities wish to maintain control over the circulation of certain types of knowledge and cultural materials based on their own cultural systems and at the same time add their expert voices and histories to the public record.¹⁶ Working with both their own collections and those of public and private institutions, many indigenous peoples want to enhance the archival and collections records with their own metadata and descriptive narratives. As Peter Toner argues:

¹⁴ See Jane Anderson, "Access and Control of Indigenous Knowledge in Libraries and Archives: Ownership and Future Use," paper presented at Correcting Course: Rebalancing Copyright for Libraries in the National and International Arena, 5–7 May 2005, Columbia University, N.Y., <http://correctingcourse.columbia.edu/program.html>, accessed 1 March 2010; Christen, "Archival Challenges and Digital Solutions in Aboriginal Australia," 21–24; Edwards, "Talking Visual Histories," 83–99; Geismar, "Photography Changes Who Gets to See Images of Us"; and Ruth Phillips, "Replacing Objects: Historical Practices for the Second Museum Age," *Canadian Historical Review* 86, no. 1 (2005): 83–110.

¹⁵ Flickr (<http://www.flickr.com>, accessed 20 September 2010) is a photo-sharing site that allows users to upload, annotate, comment on, and provide access to their personal photos. Omeka (<http://www.omeka.org>, accessed 20 September 2010) is an exhibition platform tool that allows individuals or institutions to use template-based sets to produce their own online exhibitions.

¹⁶ See Kimberly Christen, "Access and Accountability: The Ecology of Information Sharing in the Digital Age," *Anthropology News* (April 2009) 4–5; Kate Hennessy, "Virtual Repatriation and Digital Cultural Heritage," *Anthropology News* (April 2009): 5–6; Jane Hunter, Ronald Schroeter, Bevan Koopman, and Michael Henderson, "Using the Semantic Grid to Build Bridges between Museum Communities and Indigenous Communities," presented at Global Grid Forum: Semantic Grid Applications Workshop, Honolulu, Hawaii, 6–10 June 2004, University of Queensland UQeSpace, <http://espace.library.uq.edu.au/view/UQ:7929>, accessed 1 February 2010; Heidi Johnson, "Graded Access to Sensitive Materials at the Archive of the Indigenous Languages of Latin America," *Proceedings of the Joint Conference on Digital Libraries* (Washington, D.C.: IEEE Computer Society, 2003), 176–78; Powell, "A Drum Speaks, 167–79; and Karen J. Underhill, "Protocols for Native American Archival Materials," *RBM: A Journal of Rare Books, Manuscripts, and Cultural Heritage* 7, no. 2 (2006): 134–45.

It is obvious that the fundamental categories of metadata schemes like Dublin Core are based on Western systems of knowledge management. As archives work increasingly with indigenous communities on the repatriation of digitized cultural heritage materials, with a clear aim of local knowledge management, we must expand the categories of metadata to include culturally-significant styles and types of knowledge.¹⁷

Toner's work pushes collecting institutions to both re-evaluate and open their standards to the claims, histories, and knowledge systems of others. This suggestion does not argue against standards, or the necessity of them within the field and for all user groups, but more carefully calls for an expanded—or perhaps, adaptable—set of categories that would account for various information models.

Digital technologies and the Internet have combined to produce both the possibility of greater indigenous access to collections, as well as a new set of tensions for communities who wish to gain some control over the classification of, access to, and cultural protocols for the circulation of those materials. In what follows, I examine the collaborative effort to leverage the Mukurtu archive software for the production of the Plateau Peoples' Web Portal, an interactive, online archive and content management tool designed to allow Plateau peoples not only access to their cultural heritage collections at Washington State University in Pullman, Washington, and beyond, but also to facilitate the reciprocal curation of these materials.¹⁸ That is, this project defines a new process and set of standards to expand and extend the knowledge sets associated with the Plateau collections by affording tribal knowledge the same categorical weight as the institutional Dublin Core metadata. Reciprocal curation, then, is a set of practices through which both tribes and scholars annotate item-level records within specific collections with the aim of producing a rich, layered, dynamic set of knowledge. By focusing on both the collaborative relationships that we forged and the curation and content management models that we built, I aim to highlight the emergent curatorial possibilities for both collecting institutions and the many communities they serve as new digital opportunities become available for the curation, display, and reproduction of cultural heritage materials.

¹⁷ Peter Toner, "History, Memory and Music: The Repatriation of Digital Audio to Yolngu Communities, or, Memory as Metadata," in *Researchers, Communities, Institutions, Sound Recordings*, ed. Linda Barwick, Allan Marett, Jane Simpson, and Amanda Harris (Sydney, Aus.: University of Sydney, 2003), 14.

¹⁸ The portal can be accessed at <http://plateauportal.wsulibs.wsu.edu/html/ppp/>, and the portal's informational website at <http://libarts.wsu.edu/plateaucenter/portalproject/>, both accessed 23 September 2010.

Held “in Trust”: Structures for Collaborative Archive Building

In 2005, the same year I began working on the Mukurtu Wumpurrarni-kari Archive, I took a position at Washington State University (WSU). As a member of an interdisciplinary ethnic studies department, I worked to create a collaborative relationship with the Plateau Center for American Indian Studies on campus. As a relatively new unit, the Plateau Center held discussions with the tribes it served to determine both long- and short-term agendas for its work.¹⁹ The tribes wanted to make WSU’s library collections accessible—particularly to tribal members who lived on reservation lands—and at the same time to include their own discussions of, and knowledge pertaining to, these materials. It was not simply access to (being able to view) Plateau materials that tribal nations wanted, but also a voice in the curation, narration, and annotation of their materials. In this way, the tribes echoed an expanded notion of access within archival debates as well. In their archival literature review, Majia Krause and Elizabeth Yakel find that “the concept of accessibility goes beyond physical access to archival materials and involves making meaningful use of those materials through descriptive aids that enhance access.”²⁰ In fact, many digital archive projects seek to involve diverse user groups. However, what the Portal project prioritized were the specific needs of tribal nations due to their 1) histories of exclusion and oppression, 2) status as nations with government-to-government relations with the United States, and 3) alternative worldviews.²¹ Discussions of access and circulation made clear that, like many indigenous peoples worldwide, the tribes working with WSU wanted to see their political sovereignty put into cultural practice.

Sovereignty is a multivalent political term. Within indigenous communities, diverse colonial and postcolonial histories and contemporary situations make a homogenous understanding of sovereignty untenable. In fact, Joanne Barker argues that sovereignty gained particular resonance within international indigenous politics after World War II, when it “emerged not as a new but particularly valued term within Indigenous discourse to signify a multiplicity of

¹⁹ In 1997, WSU signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with several tribal nations to “strengthen the relationship between the University and the Signatory Tribes at the highest levels, to increase access to and Native American achievement at WSU.” A copy of the MOU is available online at http://www.washington.edu/diversity/summit/2008/ws_u_MOU.pdf, accessed 20 September 2010.

²⁰ Magia Ghetu Krause and Elizabeth Yakel, “Interaction in Virtual Archives: The Polar Bear Expedition Digital Collections Next Generation Finding Aid,” *American Archivist* 70 (Fall/Winter 2007): 288.

²¹ See Michael Brown, *Who Owns Native Culture?* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2004); Mary Riley, ed., *Indigenous Intellectual Property Rights: Legal Obstacles and Innovative Solutions* (Walnut Creek, Calif.: AltaMira Press, 2004).

legal and social rights to political, economic, and cultural self-determination.”²² Similarly, Tressa Berman argues that, “sovereignty, as both a political and philosophical dimension of cultural rights, is tied to claims of Native title, whether that title is to land, cultural property or art forms.”²³ Assertions of sovereignty in settler states like Canada and the United States are usually aimed at upholding or legitimizing legal political powers within the nation-state. In the American case, formalized, government-to-government relationships of “trust” between Native American nations and the United States government have historically provided little security to tribes as treaties were continually broken and communities displaced and marginalized. As global indigenous movements took shape in the 1970s, sovereignty was a common goal, and the term came to stand for a general politics of self-determination forged through land-rights, claims to community rights within nation-states, and legal recourse to reclaim cultural heritage materials.²⁴

With this backdrop, the Plateau tribes who gathered for these meetings wanted to clearly state their views, histories, and knowledge in ways that would not be dismissed or marginalized in the archival record or within the curation processes. We aimed to create a project to facilitate such cultural and political underpinnings. Our methodology meshed with some of the guidelines put forth by the “Protocols for Native American Archival Materials.” Three of the key suggestions of this group are to

- 1) Strive to develop institutional holdings that are comprehensive, inclusive, and reflect all key perspectives on Native American issues. Make an effort to collect resources created by, rather than just about, Native Americans.
- 2) Respect and act on both Native American as well as “Western” approaches to caring for archival collections. Traditional knowledge systems possess equal integrity and validity. Actions and policies for preservation, access, and use based on Native American approaches will in some cases be priorities, as a result of consultations with a tribal community.

²² Joanne Barker, Introduction, in *Sovereignty Matters: Locations of Contestation and Possibility in Indigenous Struggles for Self-Determination* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2005), 1. See also Jessica Cattelino’s notion of “relational sovereignty” in *High Stakes: Florida Seminole Gaming and Sovereignty* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2008).

²³ Tressa Berman, “As Long as the Grass Grows,” in *Indigenous Intellectual Property Rights*.

²⁴ See Michael Brown, “Sovereignty’s Betrayals,” in *Indigenous Experience Today*, ed. Marisol de la Cadena and Orin Starn (Oxford, U.K.: Berg, 2007), 171–96; Cattelino, *High Stakes*; Clifford James, “Varieties of Indigenous Experience: Diasporas, Homelands, Sovereignities,” in *Indigenous Experience Today*, 197–224; Richard Falk, *The Right of Self-Determination under International Law: The Coherence of Doctrine versus the Incoherence of Experience*. In *Self-Determination and Self-Administration: A Sourcebook* (Boulder, Colo.: Lynne Rienner, 1997), 47–63; and Duncan Ivison, Paul Patton, and Will Sanders, “Introduction,” in *Political Theory and the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*, ed. Duncan Ivison, Paul Patton, and Will Sanders, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 1–24.



FIGURE 1. Tribal representative chose an image of the Colombia River as the main image for the Portal as it unites tribes across state and local boundaries. Each tribe then has a singular image and text and audio welcome that it created, some in both English and Native languages, to mark distinctiveness and anonymity as tribal nations.

- 3) Consult with culturally affiliated community representatives to identify those materials that are culturally sensitive and develop procedures for access to and use of those materials.

In concert with the spirit and suggested guidelines in the document, the various stages of the Portal project included primary outreach to the Plateau tribes; significant and sustained consultation in design, content selection, and upgrades; respect for cultural protocols concerning sensitive materials and constant feedback; and inclusion in all aspects of decision making. Beginning with a grant in 2008, I collaborated with the Plateau Center for American Indian Studies; the Yakama Indian Nation; the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Reservation; the Coeur d'Alene Tribe; Washington State University Library's Manuscripts, Archives, and Special Collections; and regional and national

collecting institutions (including the Smithsonian Institution) to produce the Plateau Peoples' Web Portal to fulfill this mandate (see Figure 1).²⁵

At one of the first meetings about the Portal, we discussed issues of access to the materials at WSU in relation to varying types of intellectual property rights as well as the WSU library's mandate to make its collections public. The discussion by the tribal representatives made distinctions between access to, and control over, external versus internal materials—they all understood that the system WSU used (affirmed by U.S. law) made the collections public and thus open to anyone who wanted to take the time to come to the archives and do the research necessary to find the items. We also understood the historic setting that allowed this type of division of materials. As Resta et al. suggest:

Many cultural and historical artifacts of indigenous life are spread across the collections of museums and private holdings. Such holdings may be viewed on site or, increasing, electronically through virtual museums and online collections databases. Still, many indigenous people have limited access to their own cultural heritage and may be excluded also from interpreting these objects even when publicly displayed.²⁶

The Plateau tribal representatives wanted a way both to add to the record and to access and use the materials for their own projects. Much of the discussion focused on one of the enduring tensions that surrounds discussions of access to and the cataloging of Native American materials: The collections are often *public* (understood through various definitions of the public domain and conceptions of “the general public” characteristic of Western democracies/capitalist markets), although much of the content could very well be seen as *private* (subject to group protocols for viewing) to many Native Americans. The people and communities represented in the photos, films, and documents have few—if any—legal rights over how the materials are disseminated, and they could even be denied access through some types of donor agreements. Institutional standards also often make the violent or dubious histories of collections invisible by suggesting that some materials belong to the “heritage of humankind” (and are

²⁵ The Plateau Peoples' Web Portal received funding from a Northwest Academic Computing Consortium “proof of concept grant” (2008–2009) and an American Council of Learned Societies Digital Innovation Fellowship (2009–2010). The tribal representatives working on the project include Malissa Minthorn Winks, Randall Melton, and Dallas Dick from the Tamastslikt Cultural Institute Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation; Vivian Adams and Jolena Tillequots from the Yakama Nation library; Kim Matheson, Coeur d'Alene Language Department, Coeur d'Alene Tribe; Gena Peone and Marsha Wynecoop, Spokane Tribe of Indians; and Camille Pleasants, Guy Moura, and Amelia McClung from the Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation. In July 2010, the Spokane Tribe of Indians and the Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation joined the Portal project.

²⁶ Paul Resta, Lorie Roy, Marty Kreipe de Montañó, and Mark Christal, “Digital Repatriation: Virtual Museum Partnerships with Indigenous Peoples,” *Proceedings of the International Conference on Computers in Education* 2002, 1482.

thus not protected by international intellectual property rights).²⁷ The tribal representatives made clear that, while scholars may have already had their say, they wanted their knowledge to be recorded in a way that neither marginalized their histories and narratives nor downplayed their multiple interests and stakes in the collections.

Archivists and museum scholars have likewise challenged this segregation of Native and expert voices. Elizabeth Edwards argues that "...photographs and their archiving have been produced and controlled through sites of authority of the collecting society—archives, museums and universities. Their interests have been privileged in the way in which photographs have been curated, displayed and published, creating specific regimes of truth to the exclusion of others."²⁸ Our goal with the Plateau Peoples' Web Portal project was to undo these privileging practices and, in their place, to establish a set of standards that allows for multiple voices, layered context, diverse forms of metadata, and the expansion of the archival record. Peter Toner echoes this need in his work with Aboriginal people in Australia:

From my perspective, Yolngu memories are essential data for the complete documentation of the recordings, not only for the standard Dublin Core-style kinds of metadata, but also for an expanded notion of metadata which includes a whole range of layered commentaries by traditional owners about the significance of the recordings in the present cultural context.²⁹

Both Edwards and Toner point to a shift in archival and collection practices where authority and the expert voice are challenged, but not completely displaced.

Reciprocal Design: The Plateau Peoples' Web Portal

In the Portal project, all of the tribal representatives, as well as the librarians and archivists, agreed that our goal was not to erase the scholarly voice, but instead to add to it in a way that set Native knowledge on equal footing with the scholarly record. Recent advances in digital technologies allowed us the flexibility of realizing this goal, whereas even ten years ago creating such a dynamic system would not have been feasible.³⁰ Leveraging the Mukurtu

²⁷ See Colin McCarthy, *Exhibiting Maori: A History of Colonial Cultures of Display* (Oxford, U.K.: Berg Publishers, 2007); Dommann, "Lost in Tradition?"; Jason Baird Jackson, "Boasian Ethnography and Contemporary Intellectual Property Debates," *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* 154, no. 1 (2010): 40–49; Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, "Exhibitionary Complexes," in *Museum Frictions: Public Cultures/Global Transformations* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2006), 35–45; and Phillips, "Replacing Objects," 83–110.

²⁸ Edwards, "Talking Visual Histories," 83.

²⁹ Toner, "History, Memory and Music," 8.

³⁰ Legacies of first-generation digital collections management systems often hamstring institutions in their efforts to accommodate Native management systems.

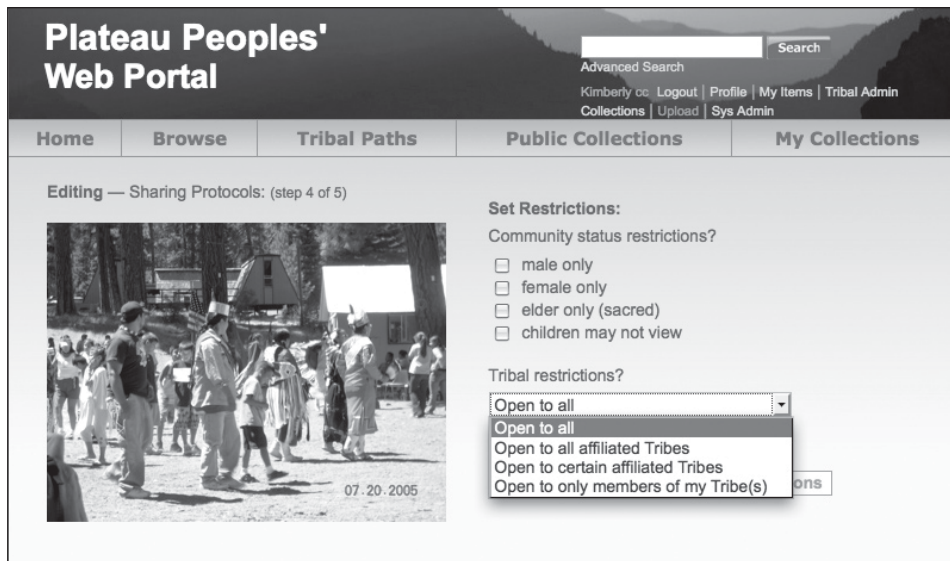


FIGURE 2. Tribal representative chose protocols for sharing materials across tribes and within their own tribes that represented common interests and understandings of the circulation of knowledge. These are dynamic and can be updated at any time.

database structure and permissions system already in place, technical staff built a second layer, providing for a more dynamic and interactive back-end administrative tool set for tribal administrators, a more robust security layer since the Portal would be online, and dual import/export systems for the ingestion of both WSU content and tribal content into the Portal.³¹ As an online “one-stop” digital archive for Plateau materials, the Portal is designed to include both institutional content, tribal content, and metadata with the potential for divergent management by tribes and/or institutional affiliates. Although the portal has one public “face,” it has multiple access points depending on one’s relation to the site. Tribes, affiliated scholars, and institutional affiliates can upload content, add metadata, map content, and add narratives. Each can choose then how to manage that material. At WSU, because we are a public institution, we cannot and do not restrict access to the materials within the Portal. Tribes or affiliated scholars who upload their private collections (or those for which they possess copyright) may choose from a combinable set of “sharing protocols” that define access to the materials. In the upload process, step four allows them to define access based on tribal affiliation (or gradations within), sacred status, and/or gender (see Figure 2). WSU or any other institution, tribe, or scholar who shares content on the site

³¹ The server software is a custom-built digital asset management package based on the LAMP or WAMP stack. The current production and development environments utilize a CentOS 5.x Linux Server Operating System, Apache Web server, MySQL as the database, and PHP as the core development language. More recent improvements to the interface have been added using jQuery.

maintains intellectual property rights over the materials and controls the ingestion of metadata and the terms of access. The administrative tool suite built into the software allows individual institutions, tribes, and/or scholars basic control over their materials and metadata. No one group can access the materials or metadata of another group—however, one can view multiple records (if they exist) on the page for an individual item or collection. For example, when viewing a record, one might find a WSU catalogue record, tribal knowledge, and/or an audio comment uploaded by a tribe. The Portal, then, allows for multiple levels of narration at the item level, allowing several “expert” voices space. To add some continuity to the site, we decided to construct a layer of basic categories for browsing and classifying the materials beyond (and in addition to) Library of Congress subject headings.

The work of determining the basic categories by which others would browse the archive and also through which the tribes would classify their materials was an exercise in cross-cultural taxonomy building. In fact, deciding on the main categories occupied several months of the project’s work. The tribal representatives as well as the library and archives project staff were well aware of the tension between using Western words, ideas, and terms as the basis for tribal classification systems and the need to make the system understandable, usable, and acceptable to a wide range of tribal, nontribal, academic, and public user groups. Over a period of several months, the tribal administrators, the library staff, and I met in person and corresponded via email narrowing down and refining the category labels to best reflect the needs of the tribes. An added constraint on the group was that although only three tribes were involved in this initial proof-of-concept phase of the project, we needed to be able to create categories that would be meaningful and transportable to all MOU tribes if they chose to participate in the project.


Our approach to defining the categories began with legal pads and lists. At one of the first meetings we simply listed all the ways in which the tribes could conceive of categorizing the content. I asked them to think of all the terms they could for the content we had and any they could anticipate including in the Portal. We then grouped our lists by larger headings and subheadings trying to narrow large themes into manageable categories. We grappled openly with the linguistic tension involved in using English terms to represent Native themes, and yet, with a multitribal portal, we could find no eloquent solution to this conundrum. We all agreed that the “best of the worst” was to thoughtfully choose English terms that each tribe individually could then define. So the category of “lands” would be defined uniquely—and in whatever language they chose—by each individual tribe.³² In addition, we added a feature to the Portal whereby

³² At the time of this writing, the tribal administrators were still drafting their unique descriptions of each category. Once they complete this task, the descriptions will be on the Portal’s secondary browse page for each tribe.

tribes would be able to add their own granular distinctions by adding subcategories at an item-level basis.

As we worked through the design and architecture of the database, we were not content to simply have a Native “comments” section, as some projects we viewed had implemented. Instead, we wanted an integrated metadata scheme that allowed for Native knowledge to be viewed side-by-side with the academic voice. Rather than follow the “crowd sourcing” approach to social tagging that presumes all knowledge to be equal, the Portal highlights the unique knowledge sets of Native peoples of the Plateau *alongside* scholars who have contributed to these collections. In the Portal, standard Dublin Core metadata is described under the “catalogue record” heading for each piece of content. Each collecting institution provides metadata for the content that they contribute to the Portal. Directly below the catalogue record tab is a “tribal catalogue record” tab. This tab evolved over the first six months of the project as the tribes interacted with the institutional metadata. At first, we thought that the tribal catalogue record would be exclusively for materials the tribe owned and uploaded into the Portal. That is, if the tribes decided that they wanted to include an image of a woven basket in the Portal, the tribal catalogue record would include all the same Dublin Core metadata fields as the institutional catalogue record. While this proved useful as a way to recognize ownership of materials, it did not provide a clear avenue for tribes to update and/or correct the catalogue record of an institutional item. If, for example, the name in a WSU record was misspelled or inaccurate, how would tribal administrators (who cannot edit the WSU catalogue record) make additions, comments, or suggestions? Our workaround was to make the tribal catalogue record serve two functions: For tribal materials, it provides a standard record—tribal administrators enter metadata for each field—but, for institutional materials (whether from WSU or elsewhere), the tribal catalogue record allows tribes to append—without erasing—the institutional record. If there is an error or point of contention in one of the fields in the catalogue record, then tribes enter their updated metadata in the same fields in the tribal catalogue record. This means that users of the Portal can view the institutional catalogue record and the tribal catalogue record noting the differences, seeing the additions and or corrections as part of a history of evolving knowledge. It was, in fact, several of the tribal representatives who suggested this layered approach. No one wanted to expunge records. We all understood the multiple benefits to tribes, scholars, and public users of the site, of seeing that history is indeed made, unmade, and negotiated over time; whereas “records” often seem official and irrefutable, they are malleable and susceptible to change over time. The current system highlights the dynamism of all knowledge, including metadata.

3WSUMASC0034.jpg
Open Item



These three ladies are in a traditional plateau camp during a celebration. The ladies are all wearing buckskin dresses more reserved for dancing and ceremonies. Their dresses are somewhat longer in length so this tells me that they are not Cayuse, Umatilla or Walla Walla. Two of the ladies are not married in this picture, one with the beaded headband the other with the headband and one eagle feather. The lady on the end wearing two feathers in her headband would draw the conclusion she is married in my beliefs and customs. I have a strong feeling that the first lady is Virginia Beavert/Yakama. Jolena Tillequots, Yakama

Tags: there are no tags Add tags?

Print Print with description + comments

Comments

• There are no comments Add a comment?

Audio comments

Administration
Add to Collection
Tribal Catalogue Record
Catalogue Record
Tribal Knowledge

Lifeways:

Ceremony

Young woman would wear these during the feast time with their hats (patlupah) and serve their traditional foods of roots and berries. If they were participating in a funeral it would be a sign of respect for the individual that had passed.

Daily Life

In a young womans' daily life she would wear a cotton wingdress. By wearing the fully beaded buckskin dresses they are at a celebration where dancing is involved.

Education

While not all children were taught the basics of education, they were able to help in putting the designs on their materials. Most woman today draw out their design and color scheme. I was always told that mothers and grandmothers would just bead and envision their final project.

Gatherings

During gatherings young woman would show their dresses and accessories to visiting friends and

FIGURE 3. Tribal knowledge is an expanded set of narratives entered under unique subheadings chosen by the tribes to represent overarching themes related to their materials.

Beyond the standard Dublin Core metadata, the tribes wanted an avenue for expressing their own significant knowledge sets. Therefore, an expanded set of metadata derived from the tribes called “tribal knowledge” can be entered by tribal administrators (see Figure 3).³³ As with the process of defining the categories, we met as a large group to decide on the labels for the tribal knowledge fields. Each category has associated tribal knowledge. For example, under the category of “lands,” tribal representatives decided on seven headings for tribal knowledge: original territory, aboriginal territory, ceded lands, treaty, reservations, allotment, lost places, and ceremony (see Figure 4). Tribal

³³ There may be several tribal administrators for each tribe. As an institution, WSU and/or the Plateau Center do not control how tribes decide who is a tribal administrator on the project. As sovereign nations, tribes have their own government structures and mechanisms for defining project representatives. We began the project with representatives from the tribes designated to work with the Plateau Center. From that point, each tribe decided on their own process for choosing materials, designating resources and representatives, defining tribal knowledge, and so on.

administrators decide which headings are relevant to the item they are working with and enter as much or as little in the way of tribal knowledge as they see fit. They can continue to add headings for tribal knowledge to the list through the “system administration” tab viewable only to institutional and tribal administrators of the system. We were committed to making tribal knowledge and categorization schemes primary without also severing our ties with institutional standards. By linking content to specific and multiple categories, we maintained the integrity of archival metadata and also add to that metadata with tribally generated and tribe-specific knowledge. Thus, the Portal’s architecture makes two fields primary: category and tribe. That is, no piece of content can be uploaded to the Portal without being linked to one or more categories and tribes. The multiplicity of this categorization system was key: No one category could (or should be expected to) capture the complexity of these materials, or contain their full and changing meaning over time. In addition, while some database structures and content management systems allow a collection item to be attributed to only one source community, the Portal’s system acknowledges the historical overlap of tribes and tribal materials. This structure allows us to privilege tribal categories and recognize that content is not devoid of personal relations—that is, content is embedded within social relations and complex histories, therefore no piece of content could be “tribe-less,” but it could be, and often is, multitribal.

The screenshot shows the 'Plateau Peoples' Web Portal' interface. At the top, there is a search bar and navigation links: 'Advanced Search', 'Kim Christen', 'Logout', 'Profile', 'My Items', 'Upload', and 'Sys Admin'. Below this is a navigation menu with tabs: 'Home', 'Browse', 'Tribal Paths', 'Public Collections', and 'My Collections'. The main content area is titled 'Administer file metadata fields' and shows 'Specific fields for root category "Lands"'. It includes a form to 'Enter a new field name (example: Artist's Name):' with a text input, a 'Text' dropdown, and a 'Go' button. Below this, a list of 'Existing fields' is shown, each with 'delete' and 'edit' links and a field type: 'Original Territory text_area', 'Aboriginal Territory text_area', 'Ceded Lands text_area', 'Treaty text_area', 'Reservations text', 'Allotment text_area', 'Lost Places text_area', and 'Ceremony text_area'. A 'Cancel' button is at the bottom of the list. At the very bottom of the page, there are links for 'Learn More' and 'Usage Policy'.

FIGURE 4. This administration page is accessible only to system administrators and tribal administrators who can add and edit fields to expand the set of subcategories for tribal knowledge fields.

Once we had agreed on the database structure, we focused on creating a manageable work process. The workflow system we created is designed to allow for maximum flexibility for both tribes and institutions while also avoiding duplication and maintaining quality control. Ingestion of WSU materials into the Portal works as follows:

- 1) Select items chosen by tribal administrators from the master pass list of all materials at WSU.
- 2) Retrieve items from their WSU locations.
- 3) Make Portal category designations from tribal input recorded on the master pass spreadsheet.
- 4) Check intellectual property rights status.
- 5) Scan items using BCR standards and guidelines.³⁴
- 6) Create file name using naming conventions for the Portal. These filenames consist of twelve characters.

Example of filename: 3wsumasc0010

First character: indicates tribal association

0 is used for material that pertains to more than one tribe.

1 is Coeur d'Alene.

2 is Umatilla.

3 is Yakama.

The next seven characters indicate the item source:

wsumasc (WSU, Manuscripts, Archives, and Special Collections)

wsuanth (WSU Museum of Anthropology)

umatppp (Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation)

yakappp (Yakama Nation)

cdapppp (Coeur d'Alene Tribe)

nwmacpp (Northwest Museum of Arts and Culture)

naapppp (Smithsonian Institution, National Anthropological Archives)

nmaippp (National Museum of the American Indian, Smithsonian Institution)

³⁴ The system uses international standards including Dublin Core metadata (<http://www.dublincore.org>) and the Open Archives Initiative, Protocol for Metadata Harvesting (<http://www.openarchives.org>) to ensure interoperability and dissemination. The current system incorporates metadata utilizing the standards from WSU's MASC department. Images from WSU MASC collections were digitized at 400 dpi 16-bit grayscale resulting in the master TIFF images; the access copy and thumbnails were auto-generated once they were uploaded into the Portal. All digital collections files are housed on hard drive arrays that are configured at RAID 5 and recorded to data tape weekly. The data tape recorder is housed off site at the central WSU Information Technology server farm. Three copies of backup tapes are kept at all times with at least one of rolling backups stored off site. The WSU Libraries has committed to maintaining in perpetuity the digital tool and digital collections in consultation with the Plateau Center for American Indian Studies and our tribal partners.

*(additional source codes to be assigned as needed)

Sequential suffix: The suffix is a four-digit numeral from 0001 to 9999 reflecting the sequence in which items are added to the Portal. (Example: 3WSUMASC0010 is the tenth item entered from MASC for the Yakama Nation).

- 7) Upload JPEGs to the Portal—individual or batch.
 - a. Enter tribal affiliations.
 - b. Assign categories.
 - c. Enter file info. This has three elements: name, media type, date.
 - d. Enter ALL catalogue record metadata.
 - e. Enter only a short, one-line description in the “add narrative” box.
 - f. Make the item “public.”
 - g. Click “add to archive.”
 - h. Create documentation, Add item to Portal log.

Tribal administrators are encouraged to follow the same process, substituting steps under number 7 with tribal knowledge and tribal catalog record entries, and step 7f gives tribes the choice to make their materials open or “choose sharing protocols” (see Figure 5).

The process for each tribe follows the same basic format when dealing with WSU materials. Tribal representatives chosen by the tribe after initial contact by

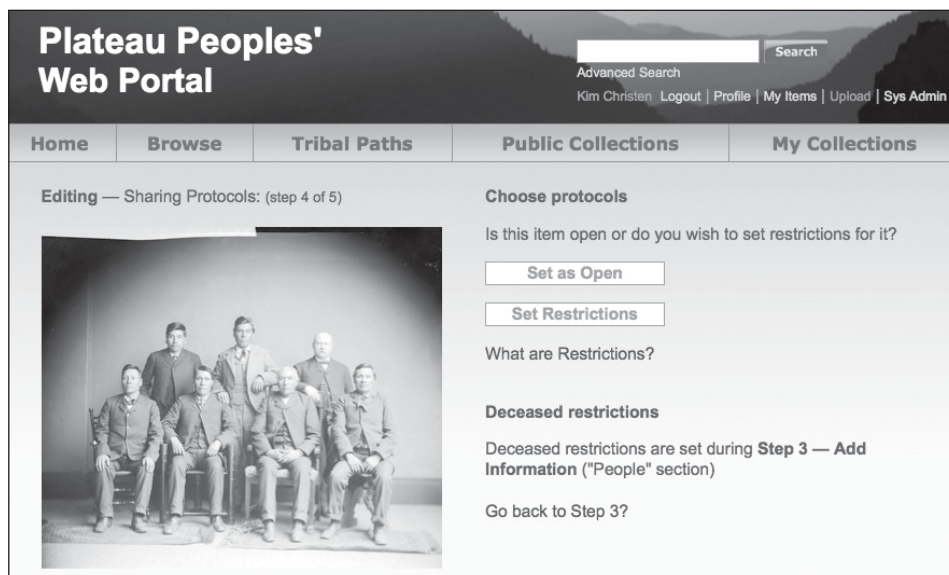


FIGURE 5. Sharing protocols allow the tribes to maintain cultural limitations on the circulation of the images they own and upload to the Portal. At this time less than 2% of tribally uploaded materials in the Portal have restrictions.

the Plateau Center come to the WSU campus in Pullman (in 2009–2010 we were able to use grant funds to support tribal travel) to the Manuscripts, Archives, and Special Collections offices in the libraries. Prior to the group meeting, the Portal team creates a “master pass” list of all the materials within the WSU collections—across campus.³⁵ Once at the libraries, the tribes are able to view both photocopies of the materials on the master pass as well as the originals from within the special collections materials. During this process, we also work closely with the tribes to identify other possible sources for possible inclusion of which we may not have been aware. The individual tribes make decisions about what they want digitized for inclusion in a variety of ways. One of the tribes takes all possible content to their tribal elders’ meeting every other Tuesday for approval. Some tribes take the materials through their “culture committees.” The process varies with each individual tribe. After the materials they have chosen from WSU are digitized, WSU Portal staff log in, upload the materials, and add the existing catalog record and metadata. Once the materials are uploaded, tribal administrators can then access them through a tab labeled “tribal admin content.” The tribal administrators have access to the uploaded content, but cannot alter the institutional record and metadata. Instead, tribal administrators access the tribal catalogue record and tribal knowledge tabs and add in their own tribal metadata, narratives, and audio or video comments.³⁶ This system allows the integrity of institutional materials to remain while simultaneously expanding the record through the entry of tribal metadata, narratives, and new content—either as individual items, collections, or as audio/video comments.³⁷

The design of the Portal highlights the layered history for each piece of content, linking histories of collection and colonization with those of survival and adaptation and thus expanding both the historical record and the range of expert voices online. For example, the Chalcraft-Pickering lantern slide collection digitized as part of the first phase of the project contains images from the Chemawa Indian School in Salem, Oregon. This collection spans tribal affiliations showing the connection of Plateau peoples’ histories and colonial encounters in the American Northwest. One image in particular, of the bakery, spawned a lengthy textual entry in the narrative section by a Yakama tribal member and two audio links by Umatilla tribal members. Accessing the image, users can read about the boarding school and its history, see the site on the map, listen to con-

³⁵ This process was greatly aided by a previous collection-level finding aid produced in 2008 collaboratively by MASC, the Plateau Center, and the Museum of Anthropology. See WSU, Plateau Center for American Indian Studies, “Finding American Indian Collections at WSU,” <http://nwda.wsulibs.wsu.edu:8080/plateau/projecthome.html>, accessed 28 January 2010.

³⁶ The tribal knowledge categories and subcategories can be edited and added to by tribal administrators on-the-fly in real time.

³⁷ Any audio or video comment that is added to an existing record (whether it be a tribal record or an institutional record) is also added into the database as a piece of content.

temporary Umatilla elders remember the food served at the school, and read the catalog record. Thus, one image digitally repatriated gave way to multiple new sets of cultural materials—digital audio files, text files, and tribal metadata. Similarly, an item for the Yakama from the McWhorter Collection at WSU, “Dancehouse of the Yakamas,” has both a brief narrative from a tribal administrator and several paragraphs of tribal knowledge entered under the lifeways category. As more material is added to the site, the potential for growth is exponential. The Portal is not only a place for materials that have already been collected, it is also a springboard for new materials. In this way, the Portal is a generative tool, providing a platform for new knowledge, new materials, and extended sets of dialogue among and between many publics.

Tribal members, scholars, students, and general Internet users may see the same materials on the site, but interact with them and define them based on different knowledge sets. Tribes, affiliated scholars, and institutional affiliates can upload content and add metadata, map content, and narratives. Visitors to the site can add comments and tags, and create individual “myCollections” areas for future research. Whereas in many museum and archive settings, experts give knowledge, and tags or comments are seen as anecdotal. In the Portal, we created a space to open dialogue and allow Native views and academic information equal space. The Portal aims to expand the archival knowledge base to highlight the range of historical and contemporary narratives and knowledge surrounding existing cultural materials and produce a platform for the production of new materials and knowledge.

Archival Imagination

Standards are more than buzzwords for archivists: they are the foundation of the profession. As an anthropologist trained to view systems as culturally constructed and politically implemented, it is oftentimes difficult to be sympathetic to pleas for maintaining standards and systems with little regard to historical and political changes, especially in light of the fact that archivists continually alter their professional practices and redefine standards to reflect emerging situations and changing contexts.³⁸ Is it too much to imagine that archivists

³⁸ For example, increased attention to the archival representation of minorities and other underrepresented groups; increased attention to ethical dilemmas brought on by genocide and/or ethnocide in maintaining and circulating individual records; changes in records management strategies in the wake of increased electronic recordkeeping, including such notions as “precustodial intervention” (see Adrian Cunningham, “Waiting for the Ghost Train: Strategies for Managing Electronic Personal Records before It Is Too Late,” *Archival Issues: Journal of the Midwest Archives Conference* 24, no. 1 (1999): 55–64, <http://www.mybestdocs.com/cunningham-waiting2.htm>, accessed 30 September 2010, and the need for, and acceptance of, personal archiving in light of social media and Web 2.0 technologies. In relation to indigenous-specific concerns, some archives in Australia limit viewing of field notes and images if they are culturally sensitive—as determined by in-depth consultation with the communities represented.

might also shift their views on *privacy*, *open access*, and what constitutes the *public good* in light of the changing contours of indigenous politics? Legal scholars and technical enthusiasts have taken advantage of changing public attitudes to file sharing and digital circulation of documents to try to swing the pendulum of access in their favor—either for more access, for “balanced” access, or for more control over access.³⁹ Archivists could do the same in relation to the expressed concerns and histories of indigenous peoples and their collections. The relatively recent call by indigenous peoples to claim a place within archives (and other collecting institutions) is part of this expanded popular discussion about the public domain as well as part of global self-determination movements and the assertions of sovereignty by marginalized indigenous communities.⁴⁰ Archivists could be at the forefront of this shifting terrain, foregrounding not just ethical considerations, but redressing historical injustices and continued marginalization as well.

Archives are already powerful places of reconciliation for many indigenous peoples in settler nations like the United States, Canada, and Australia. National archives are often the key to land claims cases, family genealogies, and community histories. Although they may induce ambivalent feelings among indigenous peoples as they remind them of oppressive systems that tore families apart, at the same time they provide comfort to those seeking historical answers and redress from the state. Archives have always been part of nation-making practices, and, as such, have often elided the needs of underrepresented groups. The historical record may, in fact, never be as transparent as some would like it to be. However, this should not stop archivists (and other collecting institution professionals) from addressing the systems of privilege that exist and that are perpetuated by rote collections management structures; inflexible (not neutral) international metadata standards; and liberal notions of privacy, access, and the public that discount histories of exclusion. Since the mid-1990s, museums, archives, libraries, and especially land grant universities (such as Washington State University) in the United States and worldwide have recognized the need to direct their energies toward outreach to and inclusion of indigenous communities in the curation process. Many archives and museums have signed MOUs with indigenous communities promising access and support in retrieving materials. Digital technologies can provide innovative ways to harness the collaborative potential between collecting institutions and indigenous

³⁹ Jane Anderson and Grace Koch, “The Politics of Context: Issues for Law, Researchers and the Creation of Databases,” in *Researchers, Communities, Institutions, Sound Recordings*; James Boyle, “The Second Enclosure Movement and the Construction of the Public Domain,” *Law and Contemporary Problems* 66, nos. 1–2 (2003): 33–74; Coombe, “Fear, Hope and Longing for the Future of Authorship;” Lawrence Lessig, *Free Culture: How Big Media Uses Technology and the Law to Lock Down Culture and Control Creativity* (New York: Penguin Press, 2004).

⁴⁰ See Martin Nakata and Marcia Langton, Introduction, in *Australian Indigenous Knowledge and Libraries*, ed. Martin Nakata and Marcia Langton (Sydney: University of Technology Sydney Press, 2005), 3–7.

communities. Dyson, Hendricks, and Grant suggest that “The multimedia capabilities, storage capacity and communication tools offered by information technology provide new opportunities to preserve and revitalize indigenous cultures and languages, and to repatriate material back to communities from national cultural institutions.”⁴¹ Using digital technologies to unite layers of knowledge surrounding archival and museum collections foregrounds the shift to the digital repatriation of objects, images, and documents. The technology alone, however, is only one aspect of the process. While new technologies allow for ease of reproduction and dissemination, they cannot ensure that respectful and reciprocal curation processes follow; that must happen face-to-face through sustained dialogue and a commitment to collaborative archival practice.

Scholars across disciplines have noted the significance of indigenous curation of collections within museums and archival institutions.⁴² There is neither a singular call, nor a one-size-fits-all answer to the archival questions indigenous peoples bring to bear on the institutions that hold much of their cultural heritage. Instead, we must recognize a diverse landscape of needs, histories, cultural politics, and local and intranational agendas. The archival imagination brings to this diverse terrain flexible guidelines, community-specific programs, expanded metadata, diverse databases, a range of expert voices, and a willingness to integrate various sets of stakeholder needs into the structure of archival collection and preservation itself.⁴³ This need not be seen as a threat to the field, or an attack on the need for interoperable standards. It does mean that archivists must use their considerable training, insights, and imaginations to rectify the erasure of crucial archival knowledge one project at a time.

Archivists, technologists, scholars, and a range of indigenous stakeholders have already come together in local, regional, national, and international settings to produce unique archival responses to historical injustices and continuing marginalization.⁴⁴ The solution is not more—the number of projects is not as paramount as the willingness of archivists to incorporate this already existing creativity and imaginative response into the fabric of everyday archival work. Once we set aside the need to dictate specific strategies or rigid standards, we can begin to see that the future of the living archive depends on the type of

⁴¹ Laurel Evelyn Dyson, Max Hendricks, and Stephen Grant, *Information Technology and Indigenous People* (New Jersey: IGI Global Press, 2007), xvi.

⁴² Joy Hendry, *Reclaiming Culture: Indigenous People and Self-Representation* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005); Christina Kreps, *Liberating Culture: Cross-Cultural Perspectives on Museums, Curation, and Heritage Preservation* (London: Routledge, 2003).

⁴³ See Thomas Nesmith, “Reopening Archives: Bringing New Contextualities into Archival Theory and Practice,” *Archivaria* 60 (2005); and Katie Shilton and Ramesh Srinivasan, “Preserving Empowered Representations: Using Archival Principles to Maintain Context for Cultural Heritage Materials,” *Archivaria* 63 (2007).

⁴⁴ See Randall Jimerson, *Archives Power: Memory, Accountability and Social Justice* (Chicago: Society of American Archivists), 2009.

innovation in which archivists are well trained and historically predisposed to implementing. Opening the collective archival imagination to the diverse needs and heterogeneous hopes of indigenous peoples has the potential to result in a more dynamic and expansive archive; not a diminished one. Training our eyes on what falls outside the margins, on what has been written over, is the work of archivists and sympathetic scholars alike. Adding indigenous knowledge systems and collections management styles only brightens this palette.

Acknowledgments

I would like to thank all of the Plateau Peoples' Web Portal tribal partners and representatives for their dedication and hard work: Vivian Adams, Jolena Tillequots, Kim Matheson, Malissa Minthorn Winks, Dallas Dick, Randall Melton, Camille Pleasants, Guy Moura, Gena Peone, and Marsha Wynecoop, as well as all of the tribal members who spent time contributing to the Portal. The Portal has been funded by a Northwest Computing Consortium Proof of Concept Grant and an American Council for Learned Societies Digital Innovation Fellowship. I have had the pleasure of working with the fantastic staff at WSU's Manuscripts, Archives, and Special Collections and without the dedication of Alex Merrill, Trevor Bond, and Cheryl Gunselman this project may never have gotten off the ground. Barbara Aston and Mary Collins provided guidance, oversight, and contacts throughout the project's early gestation through the Plateau Center for American Indian Studies at WSU. Without my Research Assistants Shawn LameBull, Emma Mueller, and Amelia McClung there would have been no digitized images or metadata to upload! Our national partners at the Smithsonian Institution's National Anthropological Archives and the National Museum of the American Indian have provided not just content for the Portal, but also advice, steady reference writing, and ongoing moral support. Specifically, Jennifer O'Neal has gone out of her way to champion this project at regional and national events that have greatly benefited the project. Finally, a heartfelt thanks to Rob Leopold who has read far too many drafts of this article and provided endless cups of coffee, editing, archival advice as well as the article's opening line.