

Indigenizing the Information Studies Curriculum in Aotearoa New Zealand

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ABSTRACT

Focusing on the impact that colonization has had on Māori knowledge systems, this paper identifies the importance of this knowledge for the library and information profession in New Zealand, and the implications of this for library and information education. It provides details about its incorporation of Māori knowledge into the curriculum of the Information Studies programs at Te Herenga Waka Victoria University of Wellington and the contribution this is making to the ongoing indigenization of the library and information profession.

ALISE RESEARCH TAXONOMY TOPICS

curriculum; education programs/schools; social justice; teaching faculty; specific populations.

AUTHOR KEYWORDS

indigenization; Mātauranga Māori; Indigenous knowledge; New Zealand; library and information science education.

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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.21900/j.alise.2023.1299>

INTRODUCTION

The terms colonization and imperialism can be used interchangeably to describe the process of one nation taking over a less powerful one, exploiting the resources, and subjecting the citizens of that nation to the values, beliefs, and knowledge systems of the colonizing nations. Māori (Indigenous peoples of New Zealand), and Indigenous populations of other countries, found their territories being claimed by explorers on behalf of their European nations under the doctrine of discovery, which legitimized the taking over the lands and dominating the lives of any non-Christian peoples by Christian nations. This paper first discusses the impact that settlement and colonization had on Māori, followed by an overview of how this is related to the library and information profession in New Zealand, and then focuses on the implications of this for library and information education, and how this is being addressed at Te Herenga Waka Victoria University of Wellington.

SETTLEMENT AND COLONIZATION

Māori lived in relative isolation until the 17th century when European explorer Abel Janzoon Tasman charted their position. However, it was not until after Captain James Cook visited in 1769 that other European settlers, traders, whalers, and sealers started to engage with Māori more regularly. By 1840, Great Britain recognised that they had to establish a formal colony in New Zealand to establish law and order, and to protect Māori interests. In February 1840, Te Tiriti o Waitangi (Treaty of Waitangi) formalised the relationship between Māori and the Crown, and in May 1840, the country was annexed and became part of the British Empire (Orange, 2020). Although largely neglected by successive governments, who breached the provisions within it, this changed in the 1970s when the Waitangi Tribunal was established to investigate Treaty claims against the Crown. In the period since the 1980s, there has been a concerted effort to resolve these claims through the tribunal or by direct negotiation with iwi (Māori tribes). The increased focus on the Treaty has also led to it having a significant influence on how the government engages with Māori, including policy and decision-making, resource allocation, and the delivery of services in health, justice, housing, education, and other areas of social and economic policy and services (Humpage, 2018). As a significant number of libraries and information management agencies are located in government, local government, and educational institutions, there is an expectation that they will meet the Treaty of Waitangi obligations required of them.

LIBRARY AND INFORMATION INSTITUTIONS AND ENGAGEMENT WITH MĀORI

Like other colonized countries, early libraries in New Zealand were created by settlers and were mostly private or subscription institutions charging members a fee for belonging, asking for contributions to the collection, or using some other form of fee raising to make their collections viable (Fields, 2018). Māori had alternative methods of knowledge management, characterized by oral transmission, whakairo (carving), tukutuku (woven panels), waiata (sung poetry), karakia (incantations), and tūtakiwā (place names). This knowledge system recognizes the interconnectedness between cosmogony, humans, and the natural environment and groups it collectively as mātauranga Māori (Māori knowledge systems). Mātauranga Māori also affirms Māori identity at the whānau (extended family), hapū (sub-tribe), and iwi (tribe) levels that

represent its social stratification, while also recognizing that each iwi may have their own knowledge system reflecting their own history, beliefs, and customary practices, which Doherty, (2012) labels mātauranga-a-iwi (iwi knowledge system).

Although libraries in New Zealand started incorporating Māori literary resources into their collections very early on, it wasn't until the 1980s that Māori started using libraries and archives in higher numbers. This was prompted by the decision in 1985 to grant the Waitangi Tribunal retrospective rights to hear claims back to 1840. This development required claimants, iwi researchers, Tribunal staff, Crown representatives, and other interested parties to research and compile information relating to claims. This increased usage resulted in a higher demand for Māori professional staff by libraries and archival institutions to provide specialist Māori information services to these user communities, and this led to many institutions creating Māori-specific positions to provide these services.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Very little has been written about library and information education in New Zealand, with most contributions being reports of formal reviews of programs (Graham, 1969; Saunders, 1987; Barron, 1993). Historical information about the formation of the different educational programs is covered by McEldowney (1962), Richardson (1998), Millen (2010), and Lilley (2013). Lilley and Paringatai, (2014) describe how library and information science education in New Zealand evolved to include Māori cultural components in curriculum content and considers the influence that the wider library and information profession, including the professional associations, Library and Information Association of New Zealand Aotearoa and Te Rōpū Whakahau, have had on the acceptance of mātauranga Māori, as a critical factor in the initial and continuing education of library and information professionals in New Zealand, and the impact that this has had on the provision of services to Māori clients. Originally delivered in 2002, Winiata, (2021) outlines the genesis and philosophy that underpins the Puna Maumahara programs at Te Wananga o Raukawa and how the graduates' knowledge and skills play a positive role in the organization and management of iwi repositories in marae-based institutions.

The international literature on library and information education is extensive. However, there is a paucity of literature that focuses specifically on Indigenous matters and library and information education, particularly in Westernized countries where colonization resulted in the suppression of Indigenous knowledge systems, Indigenous customary practices, and Indigenous languages. This approach excludes a body of literature related to Africa and populations from the Asian continent and sub-continent, where Indigenous knowledge was not as dominated as it was in countries such as Australia, Canada, New Zealand, and the United States. The literature is sourced mainly from Canada, and the United States, with a noticeable absence of literature from Australia about these issues.

The article by Nathan and Perrault (2018), focuses on the motivation for the First Nations Curriculum Concentration at the University of British Columbia, noting the increased importance of Indigenous knowledge in Canada after the publication of the report by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (2015). The authors discuss the impact of a course that creates a learning community where learners feel challenged but supported enough to continue, and where

discomfort was acknowledged as a necessary reality of unlearning biases and “problematic best practices” (p.70). In a similar approach, Samek (2021) outlines the growth in Indigenous-focused content in the curriculum at the School of Library and Information Studies at the University of Alberta and discusses the nature of their reconciliation and engagement with Indigenous communities, including students, staff, and instructors in their Master of Library and Information Studies program. Ball and Lar-Son (2021) expand further on Samek’s article by detailing how the Indigenous library and information studies in a Canadian context course has developed and grown since it was first introduced. Having designed their curriculum and its academic content after consultation with Indigenous community members and students of the School of Library and Information Studies, they see the course as a step towards educating students about “Indigenous approaches to social responsibility, research about traditional knowledges, storytelling, data sovereignty, information technology, and programming” (pp. 212).

Andrews and Humphries (2016) compared the approach that five different library and information schools in New Zealand, Canada, and the United States took toward incorporating Indigenous content in their courses. In their analysis, Andrews and Humphries identify several characteristics that constitute a course that focuses on Indigenous issues, but they emphasize that at their core “such courses seek to incorporate indigenous epistemologies, which are rooted in relationality, community, and cultural practices” (pp.4). Their paper finishes with eight recommendations on how to “realistically begin sustainable work to decolonize LIS environments” (pp.8-10).

Existing research highlights the necessity to understand the motivation for indigenizing and decolonizing library and information education, but also the impact such an approach can have on transforming student learning, professional practice and, consequently, relationships with communities.

LIBRARY AND INFORMATION STUDIES PROGRAMS IN NEW ZEALAND

Library and information studies qualifications are available at three institutions in New Zealand. Courses at the undergraduate level by two institutions, Open Polytechnic, and Te Wananga o Raukawa. The Open Polytechnic offers qualifications at certificate, diploma, and bachelor’s levels, with courses on Māori information available, with Māori content also being integrated into other courses (Open Polytechnic, 2023). Te Wananga o Raukawa is a Māori institution of higher learning, which focuses on qualifications that embed mātauranga Māori (Māori knowledge) and tikanga Māori (Māori values) into all their programs. Their Puna Maumahara programs are offered at diploma and bachelor’s levels and are intended for individuals wishing to work with their hapū (sub-tribe), iwi, or marae (cultural gathering space) (Te Wananga o Raukawa, n.d.).

The program at Te Herenga Waka Victoria University of Wellington is New Zealand’s only postgraduate suite of qualifications in library and information studies. (Victoria University of Wellington, n.d). The program was established in 1980 and offers qualifications at Postgraduate Certificate, Diploma, Masters, and Doctoral levels. After a review of the programme was undertaken in 1987 (Saunders, 1987), the lack of consideration of Māori content or Treaty of Waitangi obligations in the report was severely criticized by students enrolled in the class of 1988 (Cullen, 1996). However, it wasn’t until the 1990s that a bicultural focus started to

be observed. This included the introduction of bicultural objectives, and the introduction of a course that focused on Māori resources (Lilley and Paringatai, 2014). Māori content also features across the other courses that contribute to the qualifications.

PROFESSIONAL REGISTRATION

2006, the Library and Information Association of New Zealand Aotearoa (LIANZA) introduced a professional registration scheme. Designed to encourage ongoing professional development, the scheme adopted a body of knowledge (BOK) based on the professional elements promoted by the International Federation of Library Associations (IFLA) and added an eleventh element that focuses on Indigenous knowledge systems, which in New Zealand is focused on mātauranga Māori. (LIANZA, n.d addition to the emphasis on mātauranga Māori in BOK 11, other BOK elements include Māori focused requirements in recognition of the diverse nature of mātauranga Māori and its relevance to other core aspects of library and information science.

Every three years LIANZA reviews the suitability of the library and information management education programs that are offered and maps their academic content against the eleven parts of the body of knowledge. A critical aspect of this process is to assess where each program and the courses that are part of it are addressing mātauranga Māori across the entire body of knowledge. This assessment ensures that graduates from these programs have the knowledge necessary to become members of the professional registration scheme.

The rest of this paper focuses on how mātauranga Māori is being incorporated into the postgraduate library and information studies programs and courses at Te Herenga Waka Victoria University of Wellington and planned future developments.

TE KURA TIAKI, WHAKAWHITI KORERO – SCHOOL OF INFORMATION MANAGEMENT

The information studies programs are part of the suite of qualifications offered in a school that also offers programs in information systems, information management, and data management. There are six information studies staff members, with two staff members who identify as Māori. Several other adjunct staff also teach various courses across the programs. As the programs are taught at the graduate level, it is expected that all students will have at the very least a bachelor's level degree from any academic discipline and some experience in an information studies role is desired but not mandatory.

With the increased focus on Māori issues in New Zealand society, it is also desirable that applicants to the program have an understanding of why these are important, and how it relates to the role that libraries and other information agencies have in providing services and resources that meet the needs of Māori clients. Despite the signing of Te Tiriti o Waitangi in 1840 and a Māori cultural and linguistic renaissance over the last 40 years, there remains a significant number of New Zealanders that have no or little understanding of the history of the relationship between Māori and non-Māori, and the impact that colonization had on Māori, especially the suppression of mātauranga Māori, te reo Māori, and tikanga Māori (customs, and beliefs).

Therefore, given the growing importance of these matters to the information professions and institutions it is imperative that information studies courses include content that contextualizes the background and relevance of mātauranga Māori to the subjects being studied. Although there are two specialist optional courses that focus specifically on Māori and Indigenous issues (INFO530: Māori Information Sources, and INFO561: Indigenous Information Perspectives), Māori focused content is also included in most other courses, in keeping with the approach that LIANZA has taken to its Body of Knowledge framework for the Professional Registration scheme. This is in keeping with Indigenizing the curriculum, by ensuring that where applicable any course that is focusing on an aspect of professional knowledge, policy, or practice incorporates content that considers these matters from a Māori and/or an Indigenous perspective. For example, in INFO520: The Information Professions, the course includes modules on mātauranga Māori and provides an opportunity for students to analyze Māori and indigenous perspectives on issues relating to the information professions (See Table One for a list of the core courses, with examples of how Māori/Indigenous content is integrated into them).

Table 1

Core Courses Information Studies programs with examples of Māori/Indigenous content

Course Number	Course Title	Examples of how Māori/Indigenous content is included
INFO520	The Information Professions	Understanding what mātauranga Māori is and why it is important. Analyzing Māori and indigenous perspectives on issues relating to the information professions
INFO521	Management in Information Services	Applying Māori values in an organizational cultural context
INFO522	Information Policy, Concepts, Issues, and Processes	Māori/Indigenous perspectives on information policy issues, e.g., privacy, access to information, cultural and intellectual property etc.
INFO523	Information Access and Use	Plan information services for specific Aotearoa populations, e.g., Māori, Pasifika
INFO525	Digital Technologies for Information Professionals	Developing an understanding of Māori data sovereignty principles
INFO527	Creating and Managing Metadata	Classification and application of Māori metadata and subject headings (Ngā Upoko Tukutuku) to Māori resources
INFO528	Research Methods for Information Management Environments	Identifying the importance of kaupapa Māori and Indigenous research methodologies
INFO580	Research Project	Students can elect to pursue a research topic that focuses on Māori/Indigenous issues

Although there are two Māori faculty members in the information studies team, there is an expectation that the other faculty members will develop their own skills and knowledge of how mātauranga Māori principles can be incorporated into their own teaching and research activities. The University provides a range of continuing professional and cultural development courses for staff that assists them to develop these understandings, and ongoing mentorship and advice are readily available from Māori faculty and professional staff members (including the

Māori faculty in the Information Studies team). Participation in these continuing education activities enables staff from non-Māori backgrounds to develop a clearer comprehension of the importance of viewing and understanding knowledge from a Māori perspective. The ambition of these courses is not to indoctrinate or change the worldview of the participants but is to ensure that they have an appreciation of how Māori value knowledge, and how mātauranga Māori helps to affirm Māori identity. As such it is thought that this will improve how they approach these same issues in their own practice and role model these for their students.

There is also an ongoing emphasis on recruiting Māori students into the programs. To aid this, the School of Information Management has developed a strategic plan for increasing the recruitment, retention, and success of Māori and Pasifika students. Although Pasifika students are not Indigenous to New Zealand, they are a priority learner community in the higher education sector and experience many of the same issues as Māori students. A critical part of the plan is the setting of objectives and actions to develop and maintain Māori and Pasifika focus in the design, delivery, assessment, and evaluation of all our programs.

FUTURE DEVELOPMENTS

Although the information studies programs have grown the level of Māori relevant content over the last 35 years since the Saunders (1987) report, there is recognition that there are further changes that can be made to be even more inclusive of mātauranga Māori. One initiative currently under consideration is whether the INFO530: Māori Information Sources course should be available to students each year (currently offered in alternate years). However, this would require some rescheduling of other optional courses, which might impact and limit academic pathways for students, so will need to be managed around those requirements. The Information Studies programs are also developing a proposal for students to have the opportunity to gain an Indigenous knowledge endorsement. This specialization would join the endorsements in Archives and Records Management, and Library Science that are currently available. Finally, to continue growing an Indigenous-focused research agenda, it is intended to develop an interdisciplinary Indigenous research unit in the School of Information Management. Subject to approval and funding it is expected that this will be established in 2024.

CONCLUSION

Indigenous peoples in Westernized countries have continued to see their knowledge systems struggle to be recognized as relevant in a world that is becoming saturated with information. As the literature review in this paper has demonstrated, indigenous knowledge is being incorporated into the curriculums of Canadian, New Zealand, and United States library and information studies educational programs. The emphasis currently appears to be focused on Indigenousization rather than the decolonization of the library and information science curriculum. For the latter to occur, further work needs to be done on defining what a decolonized curriculum would involve, how it would be structured, and who would deliver it. To ensure that the decolonization process is appropriate it is necessary that any method is tailored to the education provider delivering the program rather than taking a one-size-fits-all approach. Critical to this process is building stronger relationships and taking guidance from Indigenous community

members, as it is only they who can determine what a decolonized curriculum consists of. The lead author is currently engaged in an externally funded research project that is investigating the distinction between Indigenization and decolonization, including how this may impact the delivery of library and information education. Further scholarly articles are expected over the next few years.

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