

Sharing Knowledge: Projects and Outreach for Indigenous Patrons, Languages, and Documents

ALA Americas Subcommittee Indigenous Peoples across the Americas
Compiled and edited by Michelle Guittar

For this issue of portal: Libraries and the Academy, "Global Perspectives" highlights library projects with Indigenous materials from communities across the Americas.

Introduction

At the 2023 ALA Annual Conference, the Americas Subcommittee invited panelists from academic, research, and public libraries to discuss various ways of sharing Indigenous-made materials from the United States and Latin America in the panel, "Sharing Knowledge: Projects and Outreach for Indigenous Patrons, Languages, and Documents." Collectively, the panel addressed various topics ranging from collecting and digitizing Indigenous materials for teaching, returning Indigenous materials, and crafting facsimiles of Indigenous pictorial manuscripts. The following speakers and subjects were included in the original panel at ALA:

- Giselle M. Avilés, Library of Congress, "Interconnecting Worlds: Weaving Community Narratives, Andean Histories & the Library's Collections."
- Alex Mada, Phoenix Public Library, "Whose History: A Culturally Responsive Approach in Public Library Special Collections."
- Heather Sloan, Library at Indiana University Bloomington, "The Midwest Indigenous Cartography Project."
- Jen Wolfe, Newberry Library, "Digital Collections, Crowdsourcing, and Curriculum: Strategies for Outreach With Ayer Indigenous Materials."

- David Woken, University of Chicago “The Mesoamerican Languages Portal at the University of Chicago: Indigenous Knowledge and Academic Data in a Digital Language Archive.”
- Seonaid Valiant, Arizona State University, “The Art of Reproducing Mixtec Pictorial Manuscripts.”

For “Global Perspectives,” the authors have provided written summaries of four presentations by individuals from the Phoenix Public Library, Indiana University-Bloomington, Library of Congress, and Arizona State University. What follow are individual summaries by Alex Mada, Heather Sloan, Giselle M. Aviles, and Seonaid Valiant.

Whose History to Keep

By Alex Mada (she/her), Special Collections Manager, Phoenix Public Library

Between 1819 and 1969, there were 409 federal Indian boarding schools across the United States, and hundreds more outside of federal institutions.¹ Arizona alone had 47 federal boarding schools. In 1890, Commissioner of Indian Affairs Thomas Morgan gave a speech to Phoenix residents making clear the intentions and economics of a boarding school: “Experience has shown that it is cheaper to educate an Indian than to kill him, and it costs much less to build and maintain a school than a fort.”² With support from residents, the Phoenix Indian Industrial Boarding School, commonly referred to as Phoenix Indian School, opened in 1891. The prospect of the federal government boosting the local economy through annual spending and trained “domestic servants,” and farm workers was too valuable to ignore.³ The first several decades of the school’s operation involved forced assimilation practices such as poor education, poor health services, abuse, and forced labor through an “outing program.”⁴ By 1935, the school enrollment peaked at 900 students, making it the second largest in the country.⁵ A military lifestyle and uniform requirements ended under new superintendent Carl H. Skinner, as did primary school grades. In 1936, the school transitioned to serving grades 7-12. The school continued to evolve, eventually becoming Phoenix Indian High School, fully accredited in 1960, where students embraced their culture, heritage, and language. The Phoenix Indian School, shown in Image 1, officially closed in 1990.

Collection Discovery

In 2022, the special collections manager at Phoenix Public Library (PPL) discovered paper documents and photographs taken from the Phoenix Indian School, dating from the 1930s to 1980s. The items were found with a pile of unprocessed and uncatalogued material in the local history collection, provenance unknown. The documents contained administrative notes and many photographs of young students. When these documents and photographs were found, the collection manager recognized the responsibility of a non-tribal library to respond appropriately.

Based on the *Protocols for Native American Archival Materials (Protocols)*, the items were not “culturally sensitive,” nor did they contain “traditional knowledge;” there was no depiction or discussion of sacred customs or rituals.⁶ However, consideration must be held for generations of Indigenous Peoples harmed by boarding schools and whose

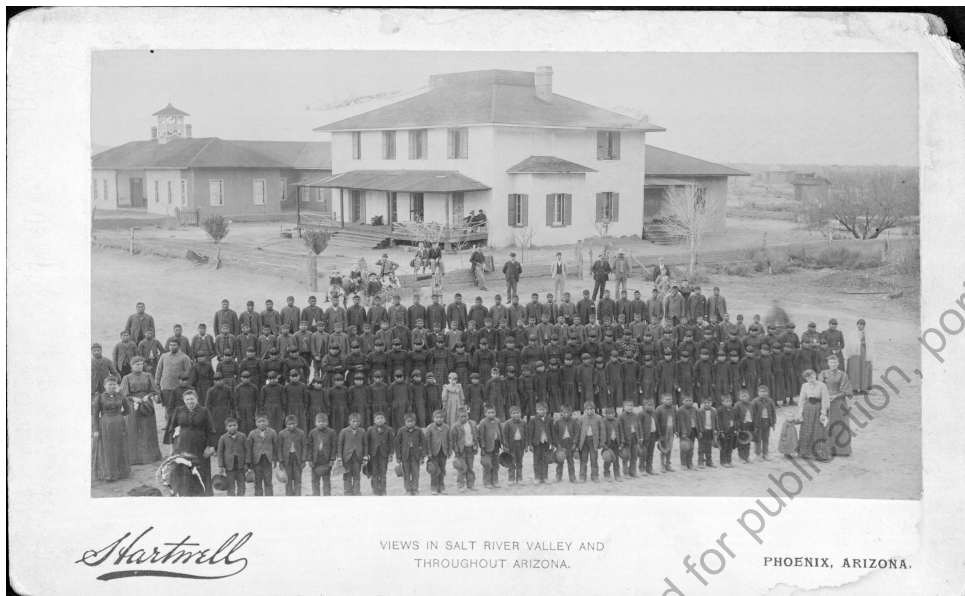


Image 1. Phoenix Indian Boarding School, ca 1898, Phoenix, Arizona by Francis Hartwell. James McClintock Collection, Phoenix Public Library

familial information may be stored in such documents. The inclusion of this material, given the history of boarding schools—particularly with the public library’s proximity to the school site—raised concerns. The site of Phoenix Indian School lies three miles from PPL’s central library.

The author looked to the *Protocols* for guidance and to *Society of American Archivists’ Access Policies for Native American Archival Materials – Case Studies* for insights on how non-tribal institutions, many of which are academic libraries, have adopted the Protocols.⁷ “Identifying Culturally Sensitive American Indian Material in a Non-tribal Institution,” from Idaho State University and “Our Sustained Commitment to Native Communities: Adoption of the Protocols as Ongoing Collection Management Process,” from Arizona State University served as two case studies particularly helpful in learning about how small and large collections have adopted policies and practices that are culturally respectful and responsive when it comes to existing collections and new acquisitions.⁸

Transfer of Records and Documents

After the school closed, the site and surrounding land was transferred to the city of Phoenix through a land exchange agreement with the Department of Interior Indian Affairs.⁹ The city of Phoenix has partnered with Native American Connections (NAC) to operate the school’s three remaining buildings, including the Phoenix Indian School Visitor Center (PISVC).¹⁰ In search of an official archive, the collection manager reached out to NAC. The NAC President provided insight into a long-standing agreement with the city of Phoenix that any Indian school found on city property would be transferred to NAC—this included the public library.

This happy bureaucratic coincidence provided a solution for the transfer of records. The material was transferred to the NAC organization during the summer of 2022 and delivered to the PISVC for archival processing. They are in the process of building an official school archive with plans to digitize the collection in the future. Since the initial transfer of records, additional school documents have been found within the public library's local history collection. The collection manager maintains a relationship with the PISVC staff, alerting them to new discoveries and completing records transfers.

Conclusion

Libraries that take on the custodial responsibility of managing special collections and archives also take on the responsibility of adopting informed collection and archival practices. The *Protocols* cannot address every non-tribal institution's concern but do provide a perspective that is often missing from discussion, encouraging institutions to adopt the guidelines in a way that suits them.

The Midwest Indigenous Cartography (MIC) Project

By Heather Sloan, Maps Assistant, Indiana University Bloomington Libraries

The Midwest Indigenous Cartography (MIC) Project was launched in 2022 with funding from Indiana University Libraries. The practical tasks of this project were straightforward. The team sought out historical and contemporary resources relating to the land and peoples of the Midwestern region. The MIC project had three main goals:

1. Expand IU Libraries' collection of Indigenous cartography and maps representing a variety of Indigenous worldviews and explore concepts of place and human-environment interconnection as expressed by First Nations peoples, especially those with historical ties to the region commonly known as the Midwest.
2. Strengthen connections with local tribes and bands.
3. Educate library staff and the broader IU community about the diversity of cartographic representations of the Midwest and gather information on Indigenous cartography and wayfinding.

The MIC team left the type of report or results expected by the end of the funding phase open-ended so that the research could guide the path forward. The funding allowed for the hire of two additional undergraduate researchers to support the MIC.

Challenges

Much excellent work is being done in the areas of Indigenous language preservation, documentation, and pedagogy. However, given the continuing dominance of English-language metadata, the team anticipated difficulty developing keyword searches that would return the breadth of records sought and, indeed, this proved to be one of the more challenging aspects of the task.

In addition, from the outset the team was aware of contrasts between traditional European-style academic inquiry and Indigenous knowledge and conceptual frameworks



(acknowledging that the latter are not monolithic across First Nations communities). Significant differences in perspective—including the understanding of space and place; human-environment relationships; and information collection, retention, and transmission—meant that the team spent considerable time exploring tensions between divergent ways of thinking about mapping, wayfinding, and cartography (again: all English words).

Finally, although the team included two individuals of Indigenous heritage, they were not descended from the *myaamiaki*, *Lënape*, *Bodwéwadmik*, or *saawwanwa* (Miami, Delaware, Potawatomi, or Shawnee), with ties to the specific land on which the project is focused. For that type of connection, the team would need to build or deepen relationships locally.

Process

During the 2022-2023 academic year, the team held meetings in person and online, and also assigned tasks, shared resources, and posed questions through a collaborative online workspace. In addition to fully participating in the research effort, the undergraduate students also contributed blog posts reflecting sub-topics of personal interest to them. By mid-spring, 2023, the team had accomplished the following:

- Inventoried IU Libraries' map holdings relevant to the topic
- Acquired new maps, particularly those by Indigenous cartographers and/or those employing counter-mapping
- Curated a short list of representative maps from IU's holdings
- Digitized relevant maps from IU's holdings
- Documented alternative modes of mapping, both contemporary and historical
- Created working definitions of key terms
- Developed an annotated bibliography of important print materials
- Assembled a larger project bibliography of broadly relevant sources
- Collected information on, and links to, related projects
- Engaged with local entities, including IU's First Nations Educational and Cultural Center (FNECC) and Global Indigenous Studies Network

Outcome and Closing Thoughts

The team ultimately decided on a StoryMap as the vehicle for sharing the culmination of our research (See <https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/b74a7eb626904f5b-8c22a41e462474fb>). Since publishing the StoryMap, team members have continued activity on IU's Bloomington campus, including presenting a related display at Herman B. Wells Library and a series of events for IU's November 2023 First Thursday celebration, coordinated with observance of International GIS Day as well. The First Thursday events, organized in collaboration with the First Nations Education and Cultural Center and the Eskenazi Museum of Art, featured:

- 1) a Midwest Soundscape sensory room, in which participants could experience a pre-settlement soundscape of local land, including sounds of nature and spoken word in the *myaamia* (Miami) language;
- 2) learning the craft of cordage using flax, a plant species native to the region; and
- 3) promotion of an artist talk by Dani Tippman, an Eiteljorg Museum Artist in Residence, about “traditional Native plants used in storytelling, food, medicine, and technology.” (See <https://eiteljorg.org/eiteljorg-events/artist-in-residence-dani-tippmann-myaaamia/>)¹¹

This project was focused on understanding and documenting “what has gone before,” that is, how a particular land region (“the Midwest”) has been named, understood, engaged with, and utilized by its inhabitants. In particular, the team was focused on: reviewing IU Library holdings, including but not limited to maps; how Indiana University has functioned as an actor in this history and an occupant of this land; and what story the library holdings currently tell about the region—that is, what narrative(s) they reinforce.

Unsurprisingly, in an academy that arose from the European tradition, the maps and texts reflect a mostly European perspective. The team acknowledges this history. Having done so and understanding that that framework continues to influence current scholarship, the intention is to continue to seek out and center Indigenous ways of knowing that are *not* currently well represented at the institution.

Interconnecting Worlds: Weaving Community Narratives, Andean Histories & the Library’s Collections

Giselle M. Aviles, Reference Librarian, Latin American, Caribbean, and European Division of the Library of Congress

As a reference librarian for the Library of Congress, I develop collections of materials from Argentina, Bolivia, and Perú, among others, as well as Indigenous collections related to Latin America and the Caribbean. When I started the role in 2020, I saw a gap in the collections for Indigenous materials and the Indigenous communities that we serve. By researching Quechua histories in the United States and South America, and Indigenous languages revitalization efforts, I discovered that Virginia has the largest Quechua speaking community in the United States, approximately three hundred thousand people mostly of Bolivian descent. I was amazed by this fact and wanted to create an audiovisual digital collection, but being from Puerto Rico and non-Indigenous, I needed the community to help create it. I wanted to approach the culture with respect and enable people to speak about what was important to them.

As I learned more about the Andes region, I felt more connected to the culture and saw similarities to my own Caribbean heritage: in the ways the communities approach life, family, and grandparents; and the ways generational knowledge is preserved. After speaking informally with several scholars in the field and reading works by Professor Américo Mendoza-Mori, Ann L. Sittig, Martha Florinda González (Maya), and Shana Inofuentes (Aymara & Ashkenazi), I proposed a research guide that would include Quechua materials from the Library of Congress and interviews with the communities. After the project was approved, I developed a competitive internship program to develop the



guide and conduct community interviews. Coincidentally, all students selected were of Peruvian Andean heritage.

The interns, Monica Soto, A.B. Bejar, and Pamela Padilla, worked with me to develop a project titled “Interconnecting Worlds: Weaving Community Narratives, Andean Histories & the Library’s Collections,” centered on sharing knowledge with and about our Indigenous patrons and learning a new language.

The 10-week internship during the summer of 2022 was intense for the team. In terms of communication platforms, our cell phones were vital, as were international messaging applications. By co-creating with community members from different states and countries—California, Illinois, Massachusetts, New York, North Carolina, Argentina, Bolivia, Peru—we developed a new space of empathy and belonging at the Library of Congress. The research guide, *Weaving Community Narratives, Andean Histories & the Library’s Collections*, offers patrons more than 300 hours of recordings and 17 interviews with visual artists, musicians, scholars, educators, and poets who speak in English, Quechua, and Spanish. (You will learn some words in Quechua too!) Now library users can search for some Quechua and Spanish words in the Library’s website, and find several resources.

For example, in “Andean Life & Memory through Storytelling,” Elva Ambía, director of Quechua Collective of New York, explains that the library in her community wouldn’t accept books in Quechua. Through her persistence, social activism, and help from her family, she fought for and won the inclusion of books in Quechua in the local library. In “Runasimi: the Language of the People,” Prof. Américo Mendoza-Mori from Harvard University, explains the importance of “creating more spaces to recognize disciplines and traditions of knowledge that for so long were overlooked or just seen as objects of study.” Shana Inofuentes, founder of the Quechua Project in Virginia, appears in the Runasimi section too. She tells us, “For so long we’ve battled this narrative that anything that’s outside of us is more intellectual, knows better, can tell us more about ourselves, and that’s really deflating, and that’s not helpful. So I thank [the Library] for being an amazing ally and for working with us to create these spaces. I think that’s really powerful. I really wish I had that growing up.”

These are just the first steps that we are taking to create more spaces of belonging. Currently, we are developing another project highlighting Indigenous collections from the Yanomami and Kotiria (Brazil), Maya (Mexico, Guatemala) and Sámi (Norway) and we are co-creating these spaces with the communities. The PALABRA Archive of the Library of Congress is another platform where patrons can access audio recordings of poetry in Indigenous languages such as Mapuche, Maya, Nahuatl, Quechua and Zapotec (see <https://guides.loc.gov/palabra-archive>).

I invite you to discover all of these resources and learn with the people. From the strangeness of all these words I believe you will find a space to understand new possibilities for familiarity and a unique way of navigating cultures through new knowledge.

Reconceptualizing and Reprinting the Tonindeye Codex

By Seonaid Valiant, PhD, Associate Curator for Latin American Studies/
Curator (interim) for Rare Books at the Arizona State University Library

Following publication of my article “Zelia Nuttall and the Tonindeye Codex: Recontextualization of a Mixtec Pictorial Manuscript,” I staged an exhibit at the Design and the Arts Library at Arizona State University (ASU) on Nuttall’s reproduction of the Tonindeye Codex and subsequent print editions.¹² The exhibit titled, “Sharing Knowledge: 20th-Century Reproductions of the Codex Tonindeye,” refers to the title of the American Library Association (ALA) panel (summer 2023) discussed here and explored two other editions of the codex not covered in the article.¹³

In my talk for the ALA panel, “The Art of Reproducing Mixtec Pictorial Manuscripts,” I discussed two of the books featured in the exhibit: Nuttall’s edition *Codex Nuttall: Facsimile of an ancient Mexican Codex belonging to Lord Zouche of Harynworth England* (1902), shown in Image 2, and the later edition by Ferdinand Anders, Maarten E. R. G. N Jansen, and Gabina Aurora Pérez Jiménez, entitled *Crónica Mixteca: el rey 8 Venado, Garra de Jaguar, y la dinastía de Tezacuualco-Zaachila: libro explicativo del llamado Codice Zouche-Nuttall* (1992).¹⁴



Image 2. Codex Nuttall: Facsimile of an ancient Mexican Codex belonging to Lord Zouche of Harynworth England (1902).



Original

The original manuscript, now known as the Codex Tonindeye (a Mixtec phrase for chronology) is from Mexico and is held in the British Museum. This accordion-fold style document, only 7.5 inches high but 33 feet in length, was created by the Mixtec people over many years, from 1100 to the early 1400s. The 47 deer-hide leaves tell the biography of the Mixtec ruler Eight Deer Jaguar-Claw and the political history of the Mixtec region (1011-1063). The individual artists are not named on the document.

Direct historical evidence is lacking, but we can presume that the codex was taken to Italy by a Dominican priest and then found its way into the San Marco monastery. The codex was reportedly seen there in the early 1870s. However, the monastery failed to stamp the manuscript, and did not catalog it before it disappeared from the archive. It eventually found its way into the collection of the British Museum, where it attracted the attention of the Mexican-American scholar Zelia Nuttall, who was responsible for creating the first reproduction of the codex.

1902 Edition

Nuttall was born in San Francisco to an adventurous family. Her father was doctor from Ireland and her mother was Mexican-American. Her family traveled across Europe during her youth, and Nuttall became adept at multiple languages. By the early 1890s, Nuttall had married and divorced the linguist Alphonse Pinart, who had introduced her to his extensive library of Indigenous manuscripts, in which she developed a passionate interest.

In November 1893, Nuttall wrote to her mentor Frederic Ward Putnam at the Peabody Museum in Boston, "There is not a single Mexican MS [manuscript] in the US."¹⁵ As an amateur scholar, Nuttall made it her mission to rectify this situation. Relocating to Florence so that she could study the Mexican codices that were found in various Italian archives, Nuttall dedicated herself to finding Indigenous-made books that could be reproduced as facsimiles and made more widely available to the scholarly community.

After hearing rumors of a Mexican codex that had gone missing from the San Marco Monastery, Nuttall eventually traced it to London, where she carefully studied the document and began to work on creating a meticulous facsimile. Nuttall's reproduction took three years to draw, print, bind, and distribute.

Nuttall's emphasis was on making her reproduction as exact as possible. Nuttall selected a printer known for artistic reproductions, Gilbert Whitehead, and worked closely with him to establish the colors and papers that would be used for the printing, staying in England to supervise the reproductions. She herself selected the colors and papers, which needed to be matte and not glazed, creating a flat surface lacking sheen. Later, Nuttall selected a German binder, Adolar Röhl, to mount the 298 copies in the accordion fashion on thin pieces of cardboard in Dresden.

Unfortunately, the book did not sell well, probably because it was poorly promoted and quite expensive. Nuttall wrote, "I am deeply grieved at the slight to the Codex Nuttall, and if people do not appreciate what the Museum has done for the scientific world by issuing it at such a great expense, I am certainly not toggging to throw another pearl to it, and not only lose time but also money in the affair...It is a shame that the Codex

Nuttall has not been bought by American libraries. You must have it well advertised during the Congress and have a table on which our publications are for sale to the public..."¹⁶ Nuttall repeatedly urged the Peabody to make more efforts to advertise, and sell, their productions.

1992 edition

In 1992, the scholars Ferdinand Anders, Maarten E. R. G. N. Jansen, and Gabina Aurora Pérez Jiménez published an edition of the Codex Tonindeye under the title *Crónica Mixteca* to coincide with the 500-year anniversary of the Europeans landing in the Americas.¹⁷ These scholars wanted to use that moment to emphasize the importance of the historicity of Indigenous knowledge and to correct earlier misunderstandings about the document. Their edition included a book in which the scholars detailed the people and actions on each page of the codex (See Image 3).¹⁸

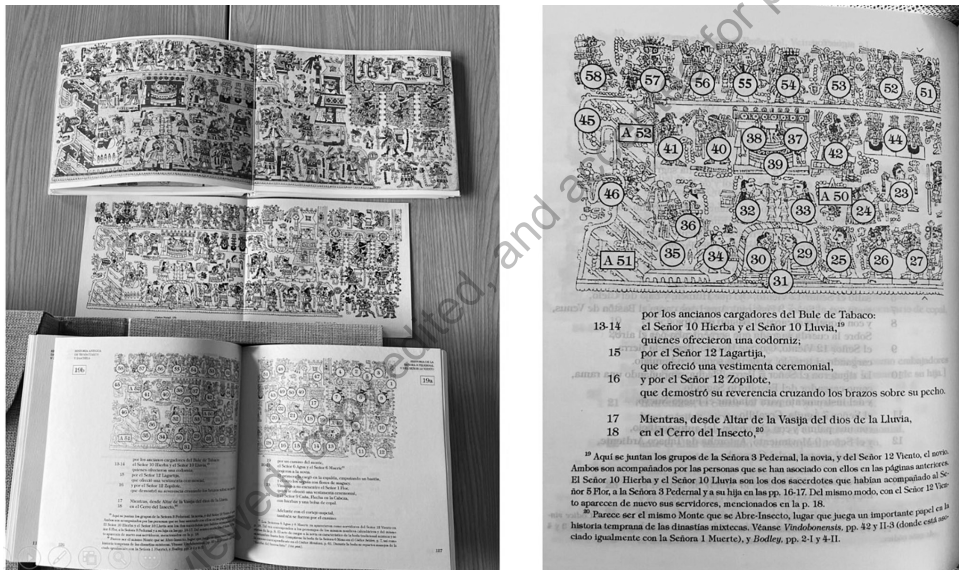


Image 3. The *Crónica Mixteca* by Ferdinand Anders, Maarten E. R. G. N. Jansen, Gabina Aurora Pérez Jiménez includes a facsimile of the Codex Nuttall/Tonindeye as well as black and white reproductions and explanations of each figure in the codex (Anders, Jansen, Jiménez. *Crónica Mixteca*.)

Gabina Aurora Pérez Jiménez is Mixtec, and she and Anders and Jansen consulted Mixtec people about their historical knowledge related to the story told in the codex. The scholars also realized that they could more fully contextualize the book by finding the places discussed in the codex. Ultimately, by consulting other documents, interviewing Mixtec people, and visiting places in the Oaxacan region referred to in the codex, Anders, Jansen, and Pérez were able to provide a detailed, nuanced interpretation to accompany their new edition. Because the first two editions included explanations in English and



German, they also emphasized the importance of publishing the new explanatory text in Spanish for Mexican people to access.¹⁹

Maarten Jansen also stressed that part of the motivation for bringing out a new edition was a keen awareness of the need for scholars to have access to primary sources through good reproductions and facsimiles. Past generations of scholars did not have easy access to photographs or digital editions through the internet, so that research on the pictorial manuscripts was, in practice, very difficult.²⁰ Students could not afford expensive facsimiles, nor could they afford to travel to see the originals.

Building on their earlier work, Anders, Jansen, and Pérez suggested that libraries adopt Indigenous names for the codices. In 2004, Jansen and Pérez published an article with suggestions for renaming multiple codices. They choose the name *Tonindeye* for this codex because it means chronicle in Mixtec.²¹ Responding to the work of these scholars, the British Museum has adopted the name *Codex Toindeye* for this pictorial manuscript.

Conclusion

While these projects from Phoenix Public Library, Indiana University-Bloomington, the Library of Congress, and Arizona State University are disparate in their focus, their common theme is a willingness to engage in intentional, deep work to find and elevate the stories of Indigenous peoples across geographies. *Global Perspectives* does not have to roam far to find new stories that shift our ways of thinking about academic libraries, collections, and services.

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Notes

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