

Running Head: INDIGENOUS INFORMATION

Indigenous Information Literacy and the Global Information Infrastructure

Sarah Lander

Emporia State University

# Indigenous Information Literacy and the Global Information Infrastructure

## Overview

This bibliography covers the multifaceted subject indigenous information literacy. The current societal environment is increasingly placing importance in the preservation and protection of indigenous knowledge; as a result information literacy has surfaced as a top priority for achieving these goals. Deciding what information literacy is one of the key debates, along with whom this literacy applies to and how it should be carried out. As library and information professionals we are positioned well to provide policies, services and resources to raise indigenous information literacy. The issue for librarians and information professionals is how do we implement this goal? The following reference sources describe the history, current practices, innovations and case studies of indigenous information literacy.

## Bibliography

Abdi, Ali A. (2007). Oral societies and colonial experiences: Sub-Saharan Africa and the de facto power of the western word. *International Education*. vol. 37, no. 1 (Fall 2007): 42-59. Retrieved June 19, 2008 from Wilson Web.

### 1. Authority of the Author

Ali A. Abdi is a professor in the Department of Educational Policy Studies University of Alberta Edmonton, Alberta, Canada.

### 2. Relevance

This article explores the history of indigenous language and knowledge system and destruction in Sub-Saharan Africa by European colonial powers. Abdi points out in the beginning the article that it is in Africa that language was first written in the form of hieroglyphics and cuneiform. Then explains that the majority of indigenous cultures are orally based. Their knowledge is

disseminated often through poetry, thought in society as the highest form of language. The indigenous oral knowledge systems impact all areas of life and culture. Abdi makes the argument that not only were people punished for speaking their native tongues, but marginalized after acquiring the colonial language based on nationalism and racism. The pervasiveness of the colonial language is such that the past promotion of European languages has created a situation where it is almost impossible to be a member of parliament or president without being fluent in one of the relevant European languages.

### 3. Contribution to Our Understanding of the GII

This article contributes to the understanding of the history of what created the GII and current situation of low literacy of indigenous information. Understanding the GII of today is reliant on understanding the GII of yesterday. The author argues that destruction of indigenous language and knowledge was committed on purpose to control populations of lands that colonialists concurred. This destruction created the English dominate GII of today.

### 4. Coverage

The coverage of this article includes a deep study of colonial Sub-Saharan Africa and extrapolation of African experience as an example of the global indigenous information literacy perspective.

### 5. Point of View/Bias

Abdi's bias comes from being a black male with experience studying Africa. His anti-colonialism point of view is a reflection of study and African heritage.

Bialostock, Steve and Whitman, Robert. (2006). Literacy campaigns and the indigenization of modernity: Rearticulations of capitalism. *Anthropology & Education Quarterly*. vol. 37, no. 4 (December 2004): 381-392. Retrieved June 25, 2008 from Wilson Web.

## 1. Authority of the Author

Steve Bialostock is an Associate Professor at the University of Wyoming College of Education.

Robert Whitman is an Assistant Professor at Eastern Washington University where he works with area tribes on issues of language, literacy and culture. Both of the authors' research examines cultural models of literacy, as well as the relationship of literacy ideologies to late modern capitalism, work and risk.

## 2. Relevance

“This article explores the idea that many current literacy interventions intended for indigenous peoples are largely reconceptualizations of earlier colonial projects that were tacitly designed to undermine indigenous cultures and epistemologies.” The authors assert that indigenous information literacy is multifaceted and traditional approaches to solving literacy issues must be community and locally based solutions. They also contend that we should not be concerned about cultural purity, the acquisition of modern tools in merely adaptation.

## 3. Contribution to Our Understanding of the GII

This article contributes a view that literacy instruction often carried out tactfully to suppress indigenous languages. Then describes how indigenous people adapt to changes in language and process out of need and want to provide for themselves and their families. This creates an understanding that the GII is created out of daily life needs, adaptation.

## 4. Coverage

This article is written to be an evaluation of current literacy practices and how they similar to practices of the past. The article also offers that current models should be from the ground up, inclusion of the indigenous people and all efforts should documented to should natural process of

literacy acquisition. A case study of Spokane, Washington is offered to support and illustrate the authors' arguments.

#### 5. Point of View/Bias

Both of the authors are white middle-class men that had white middle-class parents. They come from the point of view of an outsider.

ICDL Foundation. (2008). International Children's Digital Library Website. Retrieved June 29, 2008 from <http://www.icdlbooks.org/index.shtml>.

#### 1. Authority of the Author

ICDL Foundation is made maintained by the executive director of the foundation, three professors from the University of Maryland, an interdisciplinary team from around the world, and a board of advisors including educational institution from around the world and non-profits such as One Laptop Per Child Foundation. ICDL Foundation partners with many professional associations such as the American Library Association and the International Federation of Library Associations.

#### 2. Relevance

This website and research project address the linguistic and cultural literacy needs of many nations. It serves as a tool for both learning for native speakers of a language and researching other languages. The website is designed with bright colors and lots of graphics to illustrate search topics, it seems extremely kid friendly. What makes this resource particularly interesting is that it is engineered specifically for children, with the only drawback being that the whole website is in English. ICDL reach will lead to knowledge as to, how children's attitudes differ or agree from country to country concerning books, libraries, technology and culture? How do children want to change books, libraries, and technology in the future? And how can this information from and about

children support us in developing library programs and collections in the future? Answering these questions will help the shape next steps to take in the future to expand information literacy in the global information infrastructure.

### 3. Contribution to Our Understanding of the GII

This website and research project has contributed to the understanding of the GII in that planning and efforts to expand and strengthen the GII must consider all ages of the world's population.

This website and project recognize that the children of today will be our future. If we cultivate global understanding and literacy at a young age in the people of the world, they will carry it with them into adulthood.

### 4. Coverage

This website is a tool for children ages 3-13, as well as librarians, teachers, parents, and caregivers who work with children of these ages and secondly as a tool for international scholars and researchers in the area of children's literature. The website also serves as part of the research project logging the users from over 166 different countries with United States visiting the most followed by South Africa then China.

### 5. Point of View/Bias

Most of the funding for this project comes from the National Science Foundation, which is a United States funding source. The websites funding in combination with it's usage and research coordinators all being from the University of Maryland give the project and website a English and United States centric view point and bias.

Jimenez, Robert T., Smith, P.H. (2008). Mesoamerican literacies: Indigenous writing systems and contemporary possibilities. *Reading Research Quarterly*. vol. 43, no. 1 (Winter 2008): 28-46. Retrieved June 27, 2008 from Wilson Web.

1. Authority of the Author

Robert T. Jimenez teaches in the Department of Teaching and Learning at the Vanderbilt University in Nashville, Tennessee. Patrick H. Smith teaches in the Department of Curriculum and Instruction at the University of Texas at Brownsville.

2. Relevance

This article explains the original and significance of Mesoamerican indigenous languages. The authors argue that this article and research will begin to fill the hole in indigenous language research. Contemporary outlooks concerning written languages concentrate on African and Asian languages being the first written systems. They describe how when the colonialist came to Central America they wrote about the indigenous people having small colorful books. Literacy was likely not widespread, but similar to systems used in Japan and parts of Africa. The authors also describe how Mesoamerican information literacy involved oral systems, costumes, hand jesters, dance, music, including poetry as noted in other texts as one of the highest forms of language.

3. Contribution to Our Understanding of the GII

This article contributes a further understanding of the structures that create/created the Global Information Infrastructures of today's society. This article draws attention to society's conceptions of what literacy is and how literacies created in one historical context can be understood in another. Understanding literacy transfers is extremely important for the mobility of

the global society. Lastly, the authors present the idea that literacy needs to be considered to be more than the understanding of written alphabets in current efforts to increase literacy.

#### 4. Coverage

This interdisciplinary article is about Mesoamerican language literacy. The research conducted for this article examined primary and secondary literary sources, but the authors noted that their ability to access and find primary sources was limited.

#### 5. Point of View/Bias

Both the authors come from the point of view of having Latin American heritage and extensive academic and professional experience in multilingual studies and literacy.

Julien, Heidi. (2005). Education for information literacy instruction: A global perspective.

*Journal of Education for Library and Information Science*. vol. 46, no. 3 (Summer 2005):

210-216. Retrieved June 26, 2008 from Wilson Web.

#### 1. Authority of the Author

Heidi Julien is an Associate Professor in the School of Library and Information Studies at the University of Alberta, Canada.

#### 2. Relevance

This article is about the training of information professionals globally and whether or not they are trained enough to teach information literacy. Julien examined the curriculum of 93 graduate schools of library and information science that revealed only one school (University of Washington) having a requirement for information literacy instruction as October 2004. Yet, other schools do offer instructional training as an elective in the graduate program. Julien's article reveals a weakness in the education of the world's librarians, a problem that must be

addressed to raise the level of information literacy for the dominant cultures and languages as well as indigenous.

### 3. Contribution to Our Understanding of the GII

This article contributes to our understanding of the GII by describing the necessity of training people how to use information for the global infrastructure of information to be strong and responsive.

### 4. Coverage

The research done for this article covers the evaluation of websites and syllabi, available to the public on the web, of 93 graduate information and library science programs. The article includes a listing of programs that demonstrated courses in information literacy instruction and cited one exemplary program and five programs with information literacy instruction as an elective course. Also, included is a table based on the evaluation of 45 course syllabi for the inclusion of nine topic areas of information literacy instruction.

### 5. Point of View/Bias

This article's bias is rooted in the research method used. The author only examined websites in English and did not solicit information from non-English graduate schools or schools without websites. The author's point of view is limited to an English speaker and technology literate person's perspective.

Klos, Maureen L. (2006). Using cultural identity to improve learning. *The Educational Forum*. vol. 70, no. 4 (Summer 2006): 363-370. Retrieved June 27, 2008 from Wilson Web.

### 1. Authority of the Author

Maureen L. Klos is an English lecturer and the English for Science subject co-coordinator at the Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University, Port Elizabeth, South Africa. She has been a language educator since 1974 in both Zimbabwe and South Africa.

## 2. Relevance

This article and the study that it is based on illustrate how important indigenous knowledge is. The study found that previously student negativity and low self-esteem were replaced with a positive and realistic self-concept. The author is suggesting a paradigm shift to inclusiveness as an approach to education.

## 3. Contribution to Our Understanding of the GII

This article demonstrated that the use of indigenous knowledge and language in education will elevate the literacy of indigenous people and can also lead to the spread of English (English being the dominant language of science) strengthening the global information infrastructure. The article also describes how the global information infrastructure is comprised of a large number of people who speak two and three languages yet are not literate in the English or possibly even their home language.

## 4. Coverage

This article describes and gives the findings of a study to ascertain whether science instruction based on indigenous knowledge would lead to greater understanding of western science, this study was conducted in South Africa at the Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University. The students that participated in the study were indigenous peoples from all over the world studying at the University.

## 5. Point of View/Bias

This author's point of view is that western science is of a higher value than indigenous science. In this case indigenous knowledge is used only to allow for greater understanding of western science. The study has an English bias as English was clearly favored over all other languages for literacy.

Matesic, Gina. (2004). Indigenous nations: Sites of interest. *C&RL News*. vol. 65, no. 1

(January 2004). Retrieved June 20, 2008 from

<http://www.ala.org/ala/acrl/acrlpubs/crlnews/backissues2004/crlbackjan504/indigenoustions.cfm>.

1. Authority of the Author

Gina Matesic is a librarian at the University of Guelph-Humber in Toronto, Ontario, Canada.

2. Relevance

This article describes how the study of indigenous peoples is a multidisciplinary effort. The layers of documentation that include indigenous populations range from legal cases to maps. The author touches on the need for librarians to collect library documents about indigenous populations in the broadest manner possible to be the most effective for research. The article serves as an excellent tool for researcher and the curious to investigate indigenous populations.

3. Contribution to Our Understanding of the GII

The GII of indigenous information literacy is both the literacy of indigenous persons and all the other people. This article expands on the concept of indigenous information literacy of non-indigenous people.

4. Coverage

This article is intended to provide a selective list of internet list of resources about indigenous peoples including First Nations, Aboriginal, Indian, Inuit and other people throughout the world. The list includes 36 internet resources that span the world, with more covering the North American indigenous people.

#### 5. Point of View/Bias

The author's personal experience in North America gave the article a bias that lead to more resources being supplied for the indigenous populations of North America. Yet, the author's interest and point of view of valuing the indigenous cultures worldwide is demonstrated in her comprehensive list of resources that include other indigenous populations.

Romer-Little, Mary Eunice. (2006). Honoring our own: Rethinking indigenous languages and literacy. *Anthropology & Education Quarterly*. vol. 37, no. 4 (December 2006): 399-402. Retrieved June 18, 2008 from Wilson Web.

#### 1. Authority of the Author

Mary Eunice Romero-Little a tribal member of Cochiti Pueblo, New Mexico, is an Assistant Professor in the Curriculum and Instruction Division in the College of Education at Arizona State University. She writes this article for *Anthropology & Education Quarterly*, which is a peer-reviewed journal that publishes scholarship on schooling in social and cultural context and on human learning both inside and outside of schools.

#### 2. Relevance

In this article Romero-Little describes what indigenous literacy is and offers the caveat. She asserts that indigenous literacy is often neglected my modern society because they are based on oral societies; they are therefore marginalized and excluded from education and public school systems. She continues her argument by describing how English/European centric government

efforts to bring on education levels and literacy up often are at the expense of indigenous curriculum. The article continues to state an importance of program development needing to be through the indigenous community voice, and intellectual traditions if efforts are to be viable and sustainable.

### 3. Contribution to Our Understanding of the GII

This article talked about the need for local actions to create global reactions and change.

Understanding that local initiatives can and do have global impacts is important in understanding the GII.

### 4. Coverage

This article covers the Native American perspective of indigenous information literacy with the intention of activating global change for all indigenous peoples in the world by calling for policies at local levels under gaze of and respecting the indigenous people they are meant to serve and protect.

### 5. Point of View/Bias

Romero-Little's point of view is that of an educator who is Native American. Her example of the negative impacts governmental literacy programs is that of a the United States, No Child Left Behind from the perspective of a Native American parent, this is the only example she gives.

Roy, Loriene. (2007). Circle of literacy. *American Libraries*. vol. 38, no. 11 (December 2007): 6.

### 1. Authority of the Author

Loriene Roy is the president of the American Library Association. She is the Professor of the School of Information in the University of Texas at Austin, and together with her students runs a

national reading club for Native American children. She also directs a scholarship program encouraging Native American librarianship.

## 2. Relevance

In this article Roy gives a brief overview of the importance literacy and the shift toward non-English literacy. “I have never met a parent who did not want his or her child to be literacy in English. I have also been privileged to be included in conversations of indigenous people around the world who are working to recover and strengthen family languages.”

## 3. Contribution to Our Understanding of the GII

This article challenges the definition of global, specifically are the many nations of Native American tribes a context that is global? I say yes if they include more than one of these North America, United States, Central America and South America. This article also pointed out the importance of multi-lingual literacy, specific to the global context in that English is one of the main languages of science and parents who Roy talked to want their children to speak and be literate in their home language and English.

## 4. Coverage

This article is very brief and serves a first hand account about indigenous information literacy in the global information infrastructure. The article gives several examples of indigenous authors and a couple of World Wide Web resources.

## 5. Point of View/Bias

Roy’s point of view and bias come from her Native American heritage. Most of her examples relate to Native American literacy and she balances her bias by giving truly international resources and citing the International Federation of Library Associations.

UNESCO. (2005). Local and indigenous knowledge, linguistic diversity and knowledge societies. *UNESCO world report: Towards knowledge societies* (pp.147–157) Paris, France: UNESCO.

### 1. Authority of the Author

UNESCO is the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, this worldwide organization researches and set policy standards. UNESCO draws its authority from being a division of the UN representing a majority of the world's nation states.

### 2. Relevance

“The criteria of economic visibility that govern the worldwide information society likewise tend to exclude invisible knowledge, as knowledge-based economies rely first and foremost on the processing of codified knowledge transformed into information” (148). This report describes indigenous information as invisible because it is not written most of the time and is not one of the accepted languages of the majority that govern commerce and science. Yet, indigenous languages are the main form of expression for aspirations, personal desires, feelings and local life. Indigenous languages act as the repositories of the world's cultures. So, the report essentially juxtaposes the negatives and positives of indigenous information literacy in modern society. The main solution offered is to move toward innovations that create systems of recording indigenous information to give it mainstream value (mostly monetary).

### 3. Contribution to Our Understanding of the GII

The report both reveals the weakness of indigenous information and the value of them. This report gives understanding of where and how indigenous information fits into the GII. The report also illustrates how literacy of indigenous information leads to preservation and economic issues in the GII.

#### 4. Coverage

This chapter of the UNESCO world report outlines the significance of indigenous information literacy through a presentation of the negative and positive aspects. In addition to the outline the report includes 6 tables of examples and answers the question of why indigenous information literacy is important to the GII.

#### 5. Point of View/Bias

This report's bias and point of view come from UNESCO being represented strongly by the main world powers, representing the official languages English, French, Spanish, Arabic, Russian and Chinese only for policy creation, research and general processes.

#### Overall Summary/Conclusion

The articles and other resources selected for this bibliography were chosen on the basis of providing a varied group of sources pertaining to indigenous information literacy in the GII. The development of this bibliography led to an expansion of the definitions for information and global in the subject area of indigenous literacy. The act of collecting the resources for this bibliography made it clear that understanding the multifaceted nature of the GII is key to the information profession. In exploring these sources the root of the GII is established and further understood, as well as the continued importance of supporting and preserving indigenous information systems. These sources also demonstrated how complex and pervasive the GII is.