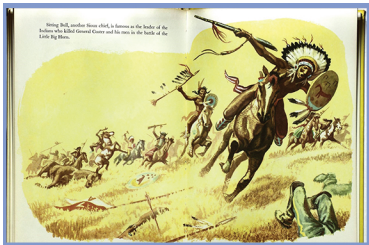


Shifting Perspectives: Presenting Problematic Depictions of Native Americans



Shifting Perspectives:

Our main product in the course of this project was the creation and presentation of a display of children's literature that focuses on Native Americans from throughout the 20th century.

With the 20th century, we narrowed our focus to encompass the 1930s, 1950s, and 1970s, to try and measure the shifting of perspectives presented in our resources throughout the middle 40 years of the century. In our display, we argue that a trend can be observed in this period where the material becomes more educational in nature, as well as more dependent on documented, historical fact rather than stereotypes. At the same time, as the educational quality of materials improved, so did the narrative of Native Americans as people who had disappeared or were not longer existant.

Xavier Keeto and Matthew Hurley

Our project sponsor was UW Special Collections, and our project was completed with input from Chadwick Allen, Michelle Martin, Miranda Belarde-Lewis, Whitney Winn.



Authors and Labor:

A minor focus of our display was taking a look at who produced the works in this collection, and how labor was acknowledged. The vast majority of our items were produced by colonizing people, and of that group, only a handful acknowledged the labor of Native People in the creation of these works. We also emphasized the work that was done by Native authors or storytellers. This focus came out of our interviews, where lack of acknowledgement of Native creators was a major concern we hoped to address.

Presenting Problematic Depictions:

One of the driving factors behind our project was how to present material that was problematic in nature. How do libraries present racially charged, historic material without legitimizing these depictions? This material is difficult to present, but should not be ignored. Not presenting it would be the same as saying that these depictions never occurred. Through our interviews we realized that context is key. Through context, libraries are able to justify the presentation of material that would be otherwise considered inappropriate for display in a formal setting.

