

Implementing the Brian Deer Classification System at the Anchorage Museum

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Project Team

Heather McClain (she/her/hers)

- 3rd year, online MLIS student
- Live and work on the unceded lands of the Eklutna Dena'ina
- Background in museum anthropology with 13+ years of experience in libraries, archives, and museums
- Archivist, Anchorage Museum



Sponsor

Anchorage Museum

- Founded in 1968
- Mission: To be a museum for people, place, planet, and potential, in service of a sustainable and equitable North, with creativity and imagination for what is possible.

Collections comprise of:

- 26,000+ art and cultural belongings
- 700,000+ photographs and archival materials
- 14,923 titles in the library

Dedicated to supporting and implementing decolonizing practices

Photo by Jim Kohl, Anchorage Museum



Project

Archives and Library in the Atwood Resource Center

- Working with communities to build relationships, and provide better access and respectful representation within our repository
- Currently use Library of Congress Classification (LCC) which can be problematic when cataloging diverse titles
- Shared my experiences participating in the iSchool Aotearoa (New Zealand) study abroad trip with Dr. Michelle Martin and Mandi Harris when I returned to work in September 2023
- Discussed possible capstone project ideas with my supervisor Monica Shah and we developed the idea for a project to research the feasibility and draft a proposal to transfer to the Brian Deer Classification System (BDCS)

Archives and Library, Atwood Resource Center, Anchorage Museum



Brian Deer Classification System

Brian Deer Classification System (BDCS)

- Developed by Kahnawá:ke librarian Brian Deer in 1974 for National Indian Brotherhood (now the Assembly of First Nations)
- Designed for flexibility to reflect local Indigenous communities and the unique collections of individual institutions
- Not widely used but there is growing literature and reference materials from institutions and scholars
 - X̱wi7̱x̱wa Library, University of British Columbia
 - Union of British Columbia Indian Chiefs
 - Aanischaaukamikw Cree Cultural Institute



XWI7XWA LIBRARY
FIRST NATIONS HOUSE OF LEARNING
xwi7xwa.library.ubc.ca

CLASSIFICATION SYSTEM

A	Reference	BP	Tlingit
BA	History & Culture, B.C.	CA-CG	History - Canada
BC	Haida	CM	Métis
BD	Tsimshian	CU-CX	History - North America
BDC	Gitxsan		
BDE	Nisga'a		
BE	Kwakwaka'wakw (Kwakiutl)	DC	Inuit
BF	Nuu-chah-nulth (Nootka)	DM	Māori
BG	Nuxalk (Bella Coola)	E	Education
BH	Heiltsuk (Bella Bella)	ER	Residential Schools
BJ	Coast Salish	F-K	Development, Law, Governance
BJA	Haisla		
BJB	Comox	M	Rights & Title
BJC	Squamish		
BJF	Sechelt	N	Environment
BJJ	Straits		
BJM	Musqueam	P	Knowledge Keeping
BJS	Sto:lo	PE	Elders
BK	Interior Salish	PW	Women
BKD	Stl'at'imx (Lillooet)		
BKE	Secwepemc (Shuswap)	S	Health
BKN	Nlaka'pamux (Thompson)	SN	Ethnobotany
BM	Ktunaxa (Kootenay)	T	Worldview
BN	Athapascan	W	Arts, Music, Dance
BNA	Carrier & Wet'suwet'en		
BNC	Sekani	X	Languages
BND	Dunne Za (Beaver)		
BNJ	Kaska-Dene	Y	Literature
BNM	Tsilhqot'in (Chilcotin)	YT-YUE	Children's Literature
BNN	Tahltan		

Concerns

If the current software used for library cataloging in the Archives and Library can accommodate BDCS

- Potentially problematic because the Anchorage Museum is a member of the Alaska Library Catalog which is a consortium of 87 public, academic, special, and K-12 libraries who serve 92% of the population of Alaska
- New software for cataloging would be expensive and could compromise accessibility if it is not compatible with the Alaska Library Catalog

Recommended changes will need to be reviewed by community members before implementation to ensure that terms are accurate and respectful

- Collaboration is important for the stewardship of knowledge in the Archives and Library from historically underrepresented and excluded communities



Work

- Completed literature review on BDCS and researched other institutions that use BDCS in their library catalog
- Talked with David Cox, Technical Services Librarian, Egan Library at University of Alaska Southeast in Juneau, Alaska about BDCS transition with the Cyril George Indigenous Knowledge Center
 - Learned that UAS is able to make BDCS changes to records in the Alaska Library Catalog, so logistical concern about the software needed was addressed

Nuch'ishtunt (Point Woronzof) looking at Dgehlisla (Mount Susitna), Anchorage, Alaska



Deliverables

- Developed recommended procedures for implementing BDCS in the Archives and Library at the Anchorage Museum
- Drafted a proposal with justification for transferring to the BDCS
- Additionally developed a working schema for implementing BDCS based on available documentation from other libraries



Next steps

- Creating a committee with staff and community members to review working schema before implementing
 - Continue to meet periodically to address recommended changes and updates
- Finding the right grant funding for project implementation
- Continuing to collaborate with other libraries in the state who are using or are looking to transition to BDCS

Anchorage Museum staff with collections at Elder's Lunch at Nay'dini'aa Na' (Chickaloon Native Village)



Thank you!

- Special thanks to Monica Shah for supporting this project and my education in the MLIS program
- Amy Valentine for her knowledge and sharing her thoughts on the project
- Julie Varee for convincing me to apply to UW
- Dr. Michelle Martin and Mandi Harris for inspiring the work
- Everyone who has supported me and I do not have room to name individually here!

Chin'an
Gu Thank you,
you are here
Ninyu