



Journal of Copyright in Education and Librarianship

ISSN 2473-8336 | journals.ku.edu/jcel

Volume 7, Issue 1 (2024)

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Cheng, S., Ocepek, M.G., & Benson, S.R. (2024). Protecting more than just books: A curricula study of traditional cultural expression in U.S. LIS programs. *Journal of Copyright in Education and Librarianship*, 7(1), 1-25.

<https://doi.org/10.17161/5w6rtm03>



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Protecting More Than Just Books: A Curricula Study of Traditional Cultural Expression in U.S. LIS Programs

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Abstract

More and more, librarians' day-to-day job responsibilities include working with Traditional Cultural Expressions (TCEs) and their divergent needs. Nevertheless, TCEs—and their specialized care—lack adequate attention and appropriate training in Library and Information Science (LIS) pedagogy. This indicates that LIS students may be less prepared to ethically work on TCE-related inquiries in the future. This study conducts a curricula content analysis of 35 ALA-accredited Master of Library and Information Science (MSLIS) programs to preliminarily assess the current state of TCE-related topics represented in LIS programs. Through investigating course descriptions, the research evaluates the depth and breadth to which LIS students' coursework incorporates topics related to TCEs and their care. The synthesized findings demonstrate that only a small number of LIS programs even offer TCE-centric courses; of these, very few programs explicitly require students to take them. Failure to integrate TCEs into the core curriculum results in students being unprepared for the corresponding challenges in their prospective workplaces, especially as most TCEs are not covered by copyright law. The implication of this study could be a fruitful and rigorous invitation for LIS educators to revise their LIS curriculum to keep pace with the ever-evolving information needs that arise in contemporary library contexts for diverse populations.

Keywords: Traditional Cultural Expression (TCE), Folklore, LIS Programs, LIS Education, Curriculum Development, Copyright Laws



Protecting More Than Just Books: A Curricula Study of Traditional Cultural Expression in U.S. LIS Programs

Introduction

The World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) defines traditional cultural expressions (TCEs) as “expressions of folklore,” which “may include music, dance, art, designs, names, signs and symbols, performances, ceremonies, architectural forms, handicrafts, and narratives, or many other artistic or cultural expressions” (n.d.). Though highly valued within Indigenous communities,¹ TCEs are regrettably often distorted or mismanaged; public discourse includes controversies about cultural misappropriation surrounding holidays, sports mascots, and more (Brandes, 1998; Cherney & Keilman, 2020; Perry, 2018; Policastri, 2018). As cultural memory institutions, both libraries and museums have been subject to criticism from law enforcement, academia, and the media for historic and present-day mismanagement of Indigenous materials. For example, the Metropolitan Museum of Art has faced increasing pressure and scrutiny regarding ancient artifacts in their collection that bear evidence of having been looted, some of which the museum is now considering repatriating (Pogrebin & Bowley, 2023).

There is also an ongoing debate about the legal system’s role in—and responsibility for—protecting and preserving the cultural expressions of Indigenous groups. Historically, many countries have tried to adapt intellectual property (IP) systems to protect TCEs.² These IP systems, however, involve inherent gaps, including fundamental disparities between an IP system’s objectives versus Indigenous aspirations concerning the safeguarding of TCEs. For example, in the United States, copyright (a form of intellectual property law) offers only limited assistance in preventing non-Indigenous entities from acquiring and possibly misappropriating TCEs (Awopetu, 2020). Awopetu (2020) emphasized that copyright law grants protection only to TCEs that meet copyright prerequisites, such as originality in their authorship and a tangible form of existence. As a result, copyright protection does not apply to many types of TCEs, including those that Indigenous communities may want to maintain under their authority, even if held within a library collection. In response to IP system shortcomings, WIPO created its Intergovernmental Committee on Intellectual Property and Genetic Resources, Traditional Knowledge and Folklore (IGC) in 2000. The IGC aims to provide

¹ In the United States, Indigenous groups can refer to Native Americans, Pacific Islanders, Native Hawaiians, and Alaskan Natives (Bird, 1999).

² See Torkornoo (2012) for Ghana, Li (2016) for China, Agyei (2020) for African countries, Purwandoko et al. (2020) for Indonesia, and Chakrabarty and Kaur (2021) for India.

comprehensive, international legal instruments for protecting traditional knowledge, genetic resources, and TCEs. Two decades later, however, IGC has yet to finalize any of these legal instruments, so many countries still rely on IP system adaptation (WIPO, 2023).

During this same period, several cultural memory institutions in the United States developed frameworks attempting to protect TCEs, especially those not covered by copyright. For instance, a group of Northern Arizona University archivists, librarians, museum curators, historians, and anthropologists generated their Protocols for Native American Archival Materials, with practical guidance for the culturally responsive care and use of Indigenous archival materials in cultural memory institutions (Beaulieu et al., 2007). In 2007, the American Philosophical Society in Philadelphia began collaborating with Indigenous elders and scholars for the digital preservation of Indigenous materials in their library (Carpenter, 2019); based on these collaborations, the American Philosophical Society established its own Indigenous collection management protocols in 2014 (Gosart, 2021). In 2010, the American Library Association (ALA) established yet another set of principles for managing TCEs (targeting librarianship specifically), which is periodically revised and updated (ALA, 2010). In it, they emphasize that ethically managing TCE-related collections requires librarians to be sensitive to the desires of stakeholding Indigenous communities. While the aforementioned protocols and ALA principles are all helpful as practical guidelines, they assume a fundamental understanding of TCE materials that the librarian would ideally have acquired during their foundational LIS education.

This study investigates the availability and centrality of TCE-related content in current graduate-level LIS education in order to assess LIS graduates' preparedness for navigating TCEs in their careers. With this aim, a direct content analysis of curricula from 35 ALA-accredited LIS programs in the United States was conducted. (See program list in Appendix.) This paper first examines the current state of TCEs, including their relationships with libraries and U.S. copyright law, presents and discusses the study's findings, and concludes with recommendations for future directions.

TCEs and Librarianship

Indigenous materials held in libraries (TCEs or otherwise) can greatly benefit both the materials' communities of origin and also the libraries' Indigenous patrons. Arguing that many socioeconomic disadvantages render Indigenous communities especially vulnerable to cultural loss, Kamani Perera (2015) advocated establishing digital libraries/museums to preserve and protect TCEs. Santyaningtyas and Noor (2016) further emphasized that TCE protection is a critical step in guaranteeing

Indigenous communities' creativity and cultural legacies. Also, Kathia S. Ibacache (2021) foregrounded libraries' potential as intellectual, inclusive spaces and resources for Indigenous and other patrons to understand and explore TCE cultural material. She recommended that librarians revitalize and promote Indigenous cultures and languages within their institutions by creating relevant library guides, supporting Indigenous-related curricula, providing open spaces for scholarly discussion on related topics, and facilitating the purchase of books in Indigenous cultures and languages according to patrons' interests (Ibacache, 2021). Furthermore, Rosalind Bucy (2022) found that Indigenous materials in libraries can also foster a sense of belonging and cultural recognition for Indigenous communities; however, she warned that such TCEs require specialized care, including deliberate consideration and respectful contextualization. Though not all these case studies are specific to the United States, each suggestion can be reasonably translated into a U.S. library context.

The ALA's Core Values of Librarianship³ are often relied upon to shape and inform U.S. library practices; many of these values mirror the benefits described above, especially diversity, education, preservation, service, and social responsibility. However, TCEs' particular nature puts them at odds with at least one ALA core value: access. Librarians regularly digitize various library materials for their protection and preservation, which can also make them more accessible. This is generally seen as beneficial. However, increased access can also increase risk of misappropriation (Burtis, 2009, p. 2). Unlike other materials, many TCEs are often both more culturally sensitive and also not copyright-protected from misuse, as explained further below. Accordingly, there may be Indigenous TCEs in libraries that their communities of origin do not wish to be broadly accessible to the general public (ALA, 2010).

Roy et al. (2012) believe that libraries' commitment to access can peacefully coexist with Indigenous people's need for self-determination regarding access to their cultural heritage. To accomplish this, both Burtis (2009) and Roy et al. (2012) have advocated that librarians directly consult with relevant communities to manage their Indigenous materials respectfully. Roy et al. (2012) argue that not doing so robs Indigenous communities of control over their cultural information, which they equate to a form of modern-day cultural imperialism (pp.164–171). The issue of access is but one example demonstrating how the ALA Core Values alone cannot adequately address the specialized needs of TCE management. The following subsections explore supplementary options available to librarians for managing TCE materials.

³ ALA's eleven Core Values of Librarianship are: access, confidentiality/privacy, democracy, diversity, education, lifelong learning, intellectual freedom, preservation, the public good, professionalism, service, social responsibility, and sustainability (2023).

Copyright Protection for TCEs

Outside the U.S., recent attempts have been made to adapt existing laws or propose new legislation for TCE protection. In the absence of adequate international binding treaty to protect TCEs, some have proposed adapting intellectual property law to specifically meet the needs of TCEs (e.g., Susanti et al., 2020 and Kanyabuhinya & Athanas, 2022). Regarding copyright law, some scholars have highlighted its shortcomings and suggested revisions (Shalihah & Hakim, 2019), and others called upon government to amend and enforce copyright law within a larger intellectual property context (Hapsari et al., 2021).

In the United States today, librarians also have limited legal avenues for managing TCEs in their collections. While copyright law's primary goal is to protect copyright holders' rights, librarians often leverage exceptions to the law as needed for managing library materials. Yet employing these provisions to reproduce and distribute TCEs specifically can be problematic, because technically, copyright does not apply to most TCEs. This is due to both the nature and scope of TCEs and the fundamental differences between legal and Indigenous definitions and perspectives.

For a set amount of time, U.S. copyright law can protect a "work" when it meets the following conditions, whether or not it was formally published. The protection applies to any "original [work] of authorship [that is] fixed in any tangible medium of expression" (17 U.S. Code § 102, 2024). The work must have "at least a modicum" of creativity and wholly exist in a permanent state (Feist Publications, Inc. v. Rural Tel. Serv. Co., 499 U.S. 340, 1991). It must be original to and created by one or more discrete authors. Joint authorship allows multiple authors to co-own the copyright if each author's contribution is: 1) significant; 2) capable of being copyrighted independently; and 3) intended to be part of an integrated whole (17 U.S.C. § 101, 201(a), 2024). Copyright ownership belongs to the work's author except in cases of transferred ownership (e.g., academic publishers) or work-for-hire (e.g., individual or corporate entities; 17 U.S. Code § 101, 201, 2024). The duration of copyright protection is complicated and variable. For all copyright-eligible works created on or after January 1, 1978, the protection will last the lifetime of the author plus seventy years, after which, they are considered public domain (Davis, 2019). Upon the author's death, copyright ownership is treated as part of their estate and passed on to relevant parties accordingly until it expires (Davis, 2019).

Because TCEs can be original and creative works, they often meet some copyright protection criteria. However, there are significant discrepancies between TCEs and copyright's other requirements, especially regarding fixation, authorship, ownership, and duration (Awopetu, 2020; Steffe, 2023). For example, orally transmitted TCEs (e.g., songs, dances, or rituals) could not qualify for copyright protection due to a lack of fixed format (Jaszi, 2017). Also, some TCEs are "authored"

by spirits (discrete or abstract, ancestral or otherwise) and gifted to recipients in trance states or dreams. For instance, in the southern Californian Diegueño Indian tribe, witch doctors and shamans receive, in their dreams, knowledge and skills to diagnose diseases and administer cures (Toffelmier & Luomala, 2006). Copyright law would not apply to TCEs like these because the author/owner is not a known, individual human being. Similarly, copyright law would not apply to TCEs that were transmitted generationally, because in many of those cases, the original author may be next-to-impossible to identify or locate. Furthermore, some TCEs are seen as *collectively* owned by an Indigenous community as a whole, which is incongruent with copyright law's concepts of individual ownership or authorship (Carpenter, 2004; Steffe, 2023). Copyright law's allowance for joint ownership applies to a collective work, not collective ownership. Therefore, joint ownership would only apply to Indigenous community members who were actively involved in creating the original work. The rest of the community, including any who maintain the work, would not be recognized as rights-holders. Finally, collective ownership of TCEs is often automatically generational (i.e., inherited in perpetuity), which conflicts with copyright protection's finite duration. TCEs currently protected by copyright will eventually enter the public domain, opening them up to copying, appropriation, or exploitation by outsiders (Farah & Tremolada, 2015; Steffe, 2023). For these reasons, copyright law is rarely a suitable legal option for protecting TCEs.

For those TCEs that do fall within copyright law's current framework, librarians managing them may find limited success when employing copyright exemptions. For example, under some circumstances (e.g., educational or non-commercial use), the fair use doctrine empowers patrons to have "fair" access to copyrighted works without the copyright holders' knowledge or input (17 U.S. Code § 107). Though this may appear to be a positive way to promote recognition of TCE protection through educational means, it may be disrespectful or even offensive to make even limited use of the TCEs without obtaining prior informed consent from the relevant Indigenous communities. In other cases, under Section 108(b), a librarian can duplicate, without requiring permission, limited copies of any unpublished work in their collection for preservation or for research use in another library (17 U.S. Code § 108, 2024). While it may be *legal* for a librarian to apply this exemption to TCE materials, it may be *unethical* to do so without confirming the relevant Indigenous communities' permission due to the culturally sensitive and often sacred nature of these materials.

To summarize, while librarians regularly consult copyright law as a guiding principle to legally work with library materials, many TCEs do not fully meet the criteria for being protected by copyright due to their aforementioned nature. As work-around solutions, Section 108 and the fair use doctrine are only helpful for works already protected by copyright law. To that end, it remains important to

understand what copyright can and cannot do for TCEs. Beyond copyright, librarians must look elsewhere for guidance on ethically handling TCEs.

Other Resources for TCE Material Library Management

When managing TCEs, librarians have a few resources they might consult for guidance, only one of which is directly intended for TCEs. For example, founded in 1986, the Library Services to Multicultural Populations Section of the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA) sponsors initiatives and fosters international dialogues about serving diverse constituencies. For the last fifteen years, they have published, translated, and revised relevant guidelines, a manifesto, and a toolkit (IFLA, n.d.). Another historical resource, “Diversity Standards: Cultural Competency for Academic Libraries,” was devised by the Association of College & Research Libraries (ACRL) in 2012. These standards provide “a framework to support libraries in engaging the complexities of providing services to diverse populations and recruiting and maintaining a diverse library workforce” (ALA, 2012). However, this document was later rescinded and replaced in 2022 by a joint ALA/Association of Research Libraries (ARL) task force project, entitled “Cultural Proficiencies for Racial Equity: A Framework” (Joint ALA/ARL Building Cultural Proficiencies for Racial Equity Framework Task Force, 2022). While the former of the two is, broadly speaking, “pro-diversity,” the latter is explicitly anti-racism, providing tools for librarians to support Black, Indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC) communities and combat historical inequity. Collectively, these resources reflect a spectrum of interests in librarianship (i.e., multiculturalism, diversity, and antiracism) that dovetail with TCEs; however, none of them offer guidance for librarians to ethically manage TCE materials.

For TCE management specifically, an ALA committee publicized a statement of principles entitled “Librarianship and Traditional Cultural Expressions: Nurturing Understanding and Respect” (2013). Acknowledging the precedent set by WIPO’s IGC committee in 2000, the authors emphasized that librarians should manage TCE-related materials in a manner that aligns with librarianship values while also considering the beliefs and rights of Indigenous communities. The statement foregrounds five of ALA’s eleven core values—access, diversity, preservation, service, and social responsibility—and posits five related concept areas: meaning and social context; respect, recognition, understanding; responsibility; reciprocity and collaboration; and stewardship. Central to “collecting, preserving, organizing and accessing TCEs,” the concept areas reflect “the relationship between libraries and TCEs as a holistic cycle” (ALA, 2010, p. 1). Each concept area circumscribes and suggests procedures for librarians to consider when respectfully tending to TCEs at each stage of this cycle. Once drafted, the statement was open for review and

comment by ALA membership; the seventh, most recently revised draft was published in 2010. In the same year, Bivens-Tatum (2010) argued that even in the most recent revision, it was still unclear how the concept areas directly supported the core values.

Collectively, the resources described above are the more common, institutionalized resources that librarians might consult when navigating TCEs in their collections. As noted, most are only tangentially related to TCEs, via attention to Indigenous populations. While the ALA's brief 2009 statement is both TCE-specific and establishes a standard, it is minimally helpful when discerning how to uphold those standards in practice. For librarians to begin to know how to follow these principles, they would need some kind of background knowledge of TCEs, ideally during their LIS education.

TCEs in LIS Education in the United States

Librarians already in the field can seek out public resources (including those described above) to develop their cultural competency about TCEs (Tumuhairwe, 2013). At best, these forms of post-graduate training are stopgap, *ad hoc* solutions; they do not provide the kind of foundational understanding that is more often developed during graduate training. Yet, despite TCEs' presence in collections and their need for specialized management, TCE representation in LIS curricula remains minimal (Andrews & Humphries, 2016).

In 2016, Andrews and Humphries surveyed five LIS program curricula from universities in three countries with sizable Indigenous populations (USA, Canada, and Aotearoa/New Zealand) to assess the presence of Indigenous knowledge in course offerings, experiential learning, and general resources. Across the three American universities, they identified eleven total courses.⁴ Ten were electives; only one course was required of students enrolled in a specialized degree track focusing on BIPOC materials.⁵ Their preliminary findings suggest that recent LIS graduates have neither the training nor the background knowledge needed to properly handle Indigenous knowledge in library contexts. The authors recognized that the results were greatly limited by their sample size; they encouraged further study of more programs. Though the research presented below narrows its focus to the U.S. alone, it builds on Andrews and Humphries' study by expanding the dataset, asking: how

⁴ The eleven courses were at the University of Arizona (5), University of Washington, Seattle (5), and University of Wisconsin—Madison (1) (Andrews & Humphries, 2016).

⁵ *Information Environments from Library and Hispanic and Native American Programs* is an elective course at the University of Arizona, but is required for the cohort enrolled in their Knowledge River Program.

does LIS curriculum (in the U.S.) prepare masters students to manage TCEs and related materials in their future librarianship careers?

Methodology

Data Sample

The authors surveyed curricula from the top 35 of 55 ALA-accredited LIS master's programs in the United States as of 2021 (U.S. News & World Report, 2022). Available courses were determined by consulting each institution's online, open-access course description or course catalog as of December 2022. A list of their course catalog URLs can be found in the Appendix. The dataset was limited to LIS-specific courses targeting MSLIS students; using degree requirement listings in tandem with course descriptions, courses that were primarily intended for undergraduate or doctoral students were excluded.

In general, course catalogs are independently and internally designed by each university and program. Some catalogs are specific to the academic year (2022–2023), while other catalogs list all courses, even those offered only periodically. At times, a course with a placeholder title (e.g., *Special Topics in LIS*) may have content that changes each semester according to current faculty specialization and availability or trending topics. For these, some catalogs listed only the generic title, others specified the content for that semester, and a few listed multiple offerings for a given title; in the last case, these courses may occur concurrently or consecutively. Also, because course catalogs are regularly revised with minimal archiving, it was difficult to confirm that every catalog entry consulted in fall 2022 was identical to what was offered when each program was ranked in 2021. Aiming for an optimally inclusive data sample, the authors considered any course that could be analyzed, based on the data available at the time.

Variations across catalogs limited the data that could be gathered and the precision with which this data could be analyzed in a preliminary survey such as this. Drawing on multiple programs, this analysis does not reflect what options would be available to any one student at a particular institution. Rather, this study paints a broad, general picture of TCE representation in U.S. LIS programs for master's students as of 2022.

Data Collection and Analysis

Data collection and content analysis were iteratively conducted.⁶ The initial dataset of 2,832 courses was compiled using each targeted LIS program's course catalog and descriptions. Using primary key terms, a preliminary review extracted courses potentially containing TCE-related content. These candidate courses both informed and were compared against developing lists of primary and secondary key terms. By no means exhaustive, the primary and secondary key term lists (see Table 1) contain vocabulary related to TCEs. Because there is no unified definition of "traditional cultural expression," the primary key term list drew from international conversations about TCEs (e.g., WIPO and UNESCO), plus U.S.-specific terms related to Native Americans. Adopted from these "official" sources, the primary key terms are specific, formal, theoretical, or authoritative/expert vocabulary.

Conversely, secondary key terms are more general, informal, practical, and commonly used. Initially compiled from course entries based on any vocabulary that might apply to TCEs (e.g., "culture"), the secondary key term list was then revised by analyzing sample syllabi offered by analyzing sample syllabi offered by three programs/universities.⁷ Terms omitted from the final list were those that were either confirmed via syllabus samples as unrelating to TCEs, or could not be verified due to a lack of available syllabi. The authors then applied the secondary key terms to the dataset to extract potential candidate courses. The data was limited by what could be learned using only course catalogs and descriptions (similar to Jones, 2020). This means that there may have been courses that potentially covered TCE-related topics but could not be identified because the description did not contain any key terms. To compensate, the authors erred on the side of inclusivity and considered any course containing any key term as a candidate for at least possibly covering some TCE material.

The authors also tracked copyright-related terms. A course was considered to contain some copyright-related content if the course title or description included any of the following terms: copyright, intellectual property, license/licensing, public domain, open access, or creative commons. For reasons explored earlier, the authors were concerned about the nuanced incongruence between TCEs and copyright law. Therefore, the authors crosschecked for the co-occurrence of TCE- and copyright-related course content by looking at TCE courses for copyright content and at copyright courses for TCE content. Final analyses compared courses based on the rank and frequency of primary or secondary key terms and the compulsory nature

⁶ As a methodology, content analysis has been lauded for its adaptability (White & Marsh, 2006); it has been widely used in LIS when analyzing course content in particular (e.g., Chu, 2006; Ameen & Erdelez, 2011; Jones, 2020). Maier (2018) highlights the value of using content analysis when analyzing communicative information.

⁷ University of Michigan—Ann Arbor, Florida State University, and University of Kentucky.

of the course, with special consideration taken of courses that appeared to concern both TCEs and copyright.

Table 1. Primary and Secondary Key Term Lists Indicating Potential TCE Content

Primary Key Terms	Secondary Key Terms
Folk (tale, lore, dance, literature, etc.) Indigenous/indigeneity Native/Native American Indian/American Indian Traditional cultural expression (TCE) Tribe/tribal	Culture Cross-cultural Cultural (asset, artifact, competency, context, community, diverse, factor, group, heritage, humility, implication, material, need, object, value) Diverse culture Diversity Intercultural Multicultural/multiculturalism Museum object

Note. These key terms are in alphabetical order; where relevant, plural forms were also included.

Findings

Using primary and secondary key term searches, courses were extracted from the dataset of the 2,832 courses across the 35 targeted LIS programs. Table 2 summarizes the frequency of primary and secondary key terms in the titles and/or descriptions. Primary key terms extracted 16 potentially relevant courses: 10 used a primary key term in the description; six had a primary key term in both the title and description. The secondary key term location was as follows: the title alone, 13; description only, 131; and both title and description, 33. Three of the 177 courses had already been identified among the 16 courses containing primary key terms.⁸ Therefore, the total number of courses potentially related to TCEs was 190 ($N = 16 + 177 - 3$). Whether the courses actually covered TCEs, or to what degree, could not be determined without further research. This was especially the case with courses identified by secondary key terms alone. At present, the authors have prioritized examining courses identified via primary key terms.

⁸ The three courses that used both primary and secondary key terms are the courses Indigenous Systems of Knowledge at University of Washington, Seattle, and Art of Storytelling as well as Multicultural Literature for Children and Young Adults at Texas Woman’s University.



Table 2. Primary and Secondary Key Terms in Title and Description

	Title Only	Description Only	Title & Description	Total
Primary Key Terms	—	10	6	16
Secondary Key Terms	13	131	33	177
			Duplications	-3
			Total	190

Primary Key Terms and TCE-related courses

By searching for primary key terms in both titles and descriptions, 16 courses were identified from nine different institutions (Table 3).⁹ Surprisingly, the most official of the primary key terms—traditional cultural expression (TCE)—did not appear in any course title or description. Of the other five primary key terms, the most common was “Indigenous/indigeneity,” used in seven relevant courses. Some derivation of “folk” was present in five courses; “Native American” was used in three. “Tribe/tribal” also appeared in three courses, two of which also already employed the term “Indigenous.”

⁹ University of Arizona (3), University of Washinton, Seattle (3), Texas Woman’s University (2), University of Hawaii—Manoa (3), University of Wisconsin—Madison (1), University of California—Los Angeles (1), University of Tennessee—Knoxville (1), The Catholic University of America (1), The University of Oklahoma (1).

Table 3. TCE-related courses from the primary key term list.

Primary Key Term (title or description)		Course title
Indigenous	(only)	Indigenous System of Knowledge (University of Washington, Seattle)
		Indigenous Librarianship (University of California—Los Angeles)
		Social Justice in Information Services (University of Arizona)
		Indigenous Oceania Approaches to Archival Advocacy & Ethics (University of Hawaii—Manoa)
		Indigenous Librarianship (University of Hawaii—Manoa)
	+ tribe/tribal	Data Sovereignty and Indigenous Knowledge Systems: Sovereign Rights, Protections, and Protocols (University of Washington, Seattle)
		Records, Archives & Memory (University of Hawaii—Manoa)
Tribe/ tribal	(only)	Oklahoma Information Environment (The University of Oklahoma)
Folk	folktales	Storytelling in a Digital Age (University of Washington, Seattle)
	folklore	Field Methods and the Public Presentation of Folklore (University of Wisconsin—Madison)
		Humanities and Social Sciences Sources, Services and Scholarship (University of Tennessee—Knoxville)
	folk literature	Art of Storytelling (Texas Woman’s University)
folk dance	Music Bibliography (The Catholic University of America)	
Native American		Information Environments from Non-Dominant Perspectives (University of Arizona)
		Health Information in Ethnic-Cultural Communities (University of Arizona)
		Multicultural Literature for Children and Young Adults (Texas Woman’s University)

Compulsory Nature of Courses

Whether a course is required can determine the likelihood of *all* LIS students in a program having some formal training in handling TCE-related materials. Within the basic binary of required versus elective, the authors found a more nuanced subdivision grouped in pairs. The “required” category subdivided into (a) courses required of all LIS students to satisfy degree requirements, regardless of concentration or career pathway and (b) courses required for students within a certain concentration (e.g., archive management, public librarianship). The “elective” category subdivided into (a) elective options within required courses (i.e., required category, component, or skill set), where the course at hand is one of several options within a larger course requirement, and (b) purely elective courses.

Figure 1. Elective vs. required courses

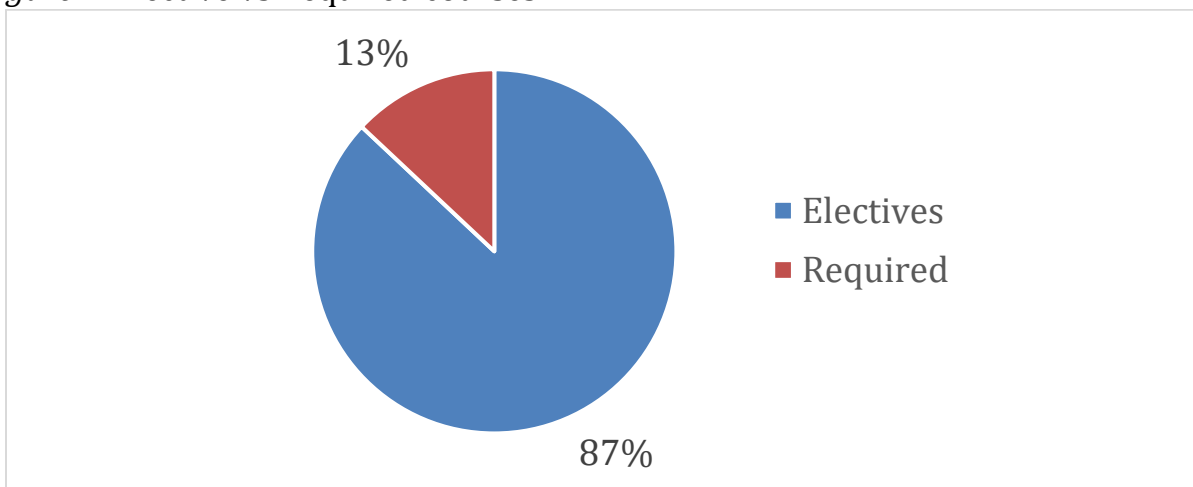
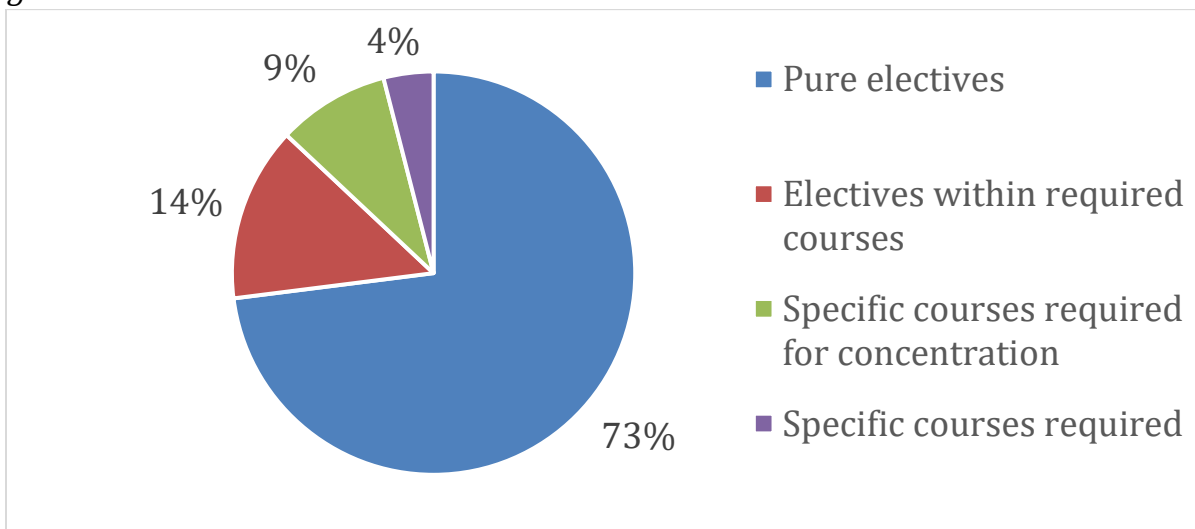


Figure 2. The Nature of the relevant courses



The courses were analyzed to assess the binary and subdivided categories (Figures 1 and 2). Out of the 190 courses potentially related to TCEs, 25 were required to some degree. Of these, only eight were required of *all* LIS students in a program; 17 were required for students within a specific concentration. The remaining 165 courses were elective in some way. Twenty-six were elective options within a broader required category. There was only one case in which all of the electives within a requirement were related to TCEs.¹⁰ The other 139 courses were purely elective.

Courses Containing Both TCE-Related Topics and Copyright

Due to the ongoing conversation regarding the application of copyright law to the TCEs,¹¹ cursory content analysis was conducted to determine whether this debate was present in LIS curriculum. Out of all 2,832 LIS course titles and descriptions, merely 71 appeared to pay much attention to copyright (as indicated by relevant terms in their course catalogs). Only four of these 71 courses also included TCE-related key terms (all secondary). Though further research would be needed to fully confirm how TCE and copyright content within a course related to each other, three of the four courses did not appear to be directly related (see Table 4). One course, *Digital Stewardship*, was concerned with digital materials management, which is central to the concerns of TCE management in libraries. Therefore, the authors inferred that this course is more likely to discuss TCEs and copyright concurrently.

¹⁰ At University of Arizona, students were required to choose (elect to take) one course within a required category—Cultural Perspective on Libraries & Information—and all the options were TCE-related courses. Therefore, no matter which option they chose, they would still receive some TCE-related training.

¹¹ As referenced earlier in the paper, the conversation includes: Carpenter (2004), Farah and Tremolada (2015), Jaszi (2017), Awopetu (2020), Shalihah and Hakim (2019), Susanti et al. (2020), Kanyabuhinya and Athanas (2022), and Steffe (2023).

Table 4. Copyright-related course containing TCE-related key terms

Course	Description Excerpt
The History of Books, Documents, and Records in Print and Electronic Environments (Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey—New Brunswick)	[...] An overview and comparison of textual transmission in oral, manuscript, print and electronic communication environments will include regulatory frameworks and the history of “ intellectual property ” (from attribution, authorship, to participatory ownership of creation). [...] [Among multiple learning objectives, students will also examine] theoretical issues and selected in-depth study of significant case studies in the current multidisciplinary scholarship of electronic and print culture . (Rutgers University, n.d.)
Print Culture and Society (University of Alabama)	Examines the book as a cultural artifact and explores the impact of print culture on communication and knowledge/information production in Europe and the United States. Topics include orality and literacy, reading, authorship, copyright , markets and distribution, and the future of books in a digital age. (University of Alabama, n.d.)
Copyright & Licensing Institute (The Catholic University of America)	The emphasis will be on understanding copyright, licensing and electronic rights (e-rights) in modern culture and technology, and applying this understanding to the use of copyright and licensed content in a variety of library settings. Topics for this course include: 1) the basics of copyright , 2) digital copyright issues, 3) library copyright issues, 4) permissions and licensing , and, 5) managing copyright and licensing in libraries. (Catholic University of America, n.d.)
Digital Stewardship (Simmons University)	This course [...] covers the digital convergence of cultural heritage information in libraries, archives and museums. [...] The course also includes extensive discussion of policy issues affecting digital collections, including sustainability issues for digital repositories, and open access to digital resources. (Simmons University, n.d.)

Discussion

This study began as an expansion of Andrews and Humphries's 2016 assessment of Indigenous knowledge representation in LIS program curricula in five LIS programs (three in the United States). Seeking to test the initial hypothesis specifically within a U.S. context, the present study's authors employed content analysis of over 2,832 courses offered at 35 top-ranked programs to illuminate how and to what degree TCE-related topics are currently represented in the LIS curriculum in the United States. The authors determined that the current curriculum fails to ensure that future librarians are properly trained to ethically handle TCE materials based on minimal course offerings, lack of foregrounded authoritative terminology, and the elective nature of most relevant courses.

The 190 courses possibly related—and of those, the only 16 courses clearly related—to TCEs account for only 6% or 0.5% of the LIS curriculum (respectively). Not only are these small percentages, but there is a substantial difference between them. Primary key terms identify the latter and demonstrate clear relevance. The former was identified via secondary key terms, which are often so broad (e.g., culture or diversity) that it was difficult to confirm the relevance or coverage of TCE-specific content. These results indicate that not only are TCEs not well represented in the LIS curriculum but also that the LIS field may not be well-versed in using current authoritative terminology surrounding TCEs. This is reinforced by the fact that the primary key term, “traditional cultural expression,” is never used.

When integrating courses into LIS curricula, educators can be more conscious of the language they use to depict the involvement of TCE-related topics in the course descriptions (and especially course titles). Incorporating TCE-specific terminology would allow students to easily confirm which courses contain relevant content. Interestingly, while secondary key terms made it difficult to confirm relevance, they can also identify which courses may be prime opportunities for TCE content to be more intentionally incorporated into the curriculum, especially if course descriptions are revised to more authoritatively indicate TCE content. In addition, bringing TCE-specific information into course coverage increases the likelihood that newly graduated librarians will be well-versed in the terminology necessary to skillfully participate in interdisciplinary or public-sector conversations about TCEs. In fact, Roy (2015) confirmed the feasibility and benefits of building a curricular model based upon Indigenous ecology or educational environment within LIS education, which can offer a means of respecting diversity and can strongly uphold professional values, such as those related to information access.

There appears to be an inverse relationship between the likelihood of TCE coverage and the likelihood that students would gain exposure to that coverage. The 16 courses considered most likely to cover TCE content (signaled by using primary key terms) were all elective options. Conversely, the eight (out of 190) courses that

were required were less strongly connected to TCEs (based on being identified via secondary key terms). This means that, unless a student is already engaged in studying Indigenous cultures and materials, they may not even realize or consider that they will need TCE-related background and skills in their future careers. Therefore, most students will not automatically acquire relevant knowledge, especially those who are unaware of or disinterested in TCE-related topics. As explained in the introduction, both TCEs and Indigenous rights regarding them are a current and critical concern for today's librarians. Therefore, LIS graduates need at least some exposure to them and training to navigate them. Ideally, every LIS program would require at least one course that focuses on TCEs and the debates surrounding them. At the very least, LIS educators could target core-competency courses already required of LIS students as ideal sites for incorporating relevant TCE materials.

As described earlier, librarians often rely on U.S. copyright law exemptions to manage their materials, yet these exemptions are not applicable to the many TCEs not protected by copyright. Though four courses potentially covered some copyright and some TCE content, only one appeared likely to discuss them simultaneously. Even in one case, however, copyright and TCEs were merely part of a larger discussion regarding cultural heritage (broadly conceived), as opposed to a focused debate on the problematic relationship between copyright and TCEs themselves. Cumulatively, these findings indicate that the relationships between TCEs and copyright law, especially where incongruent, are not significantly taught in LIS curriculum. Therefore, graduates are unlikely to understand when copyright exemptions can and cannot be applied, which may impair their ability to make ethical decisions or lead to undue legal responsibility in their workplace. While there are many things for librarians to know about TCEs, TCEs' relationship with copyright legislation is especially important because this is one way that librarians attempt to manage TCE materials. LIS curriculum can do more to ensure that: (a) any courses that focus on TCEs include current content about their complicated relationship with copyright legislation and (b) courses that focus on copyright include information about copyright's applicability or inapplicability to TCEs.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Borrowing from ALA's core values, libraries are sites of diversity and serve the public good. Whether or not a specific library formally houses physical TCEs, most librarians will navigate TCE materials or inquiries at some point in their careers; many may encounter them regularly. This preliminary study examined the state of TCE-related content in U.S. LIS programs to assess LIS graduates' preparedness for managing TCEs in future employment contexts, which yielded

important practical implications. In order to participate in ongoing conversations about TCEs within LIS, librarians need to graduate with at least some basic training in how to ethically manage TCE materials. Yet this study revealed that the current curriculum offers very few opportunities to acquire adequate training or background in TCE management. Therefore, the authors invite LIS educators to further integrate TCE-related courses (or course content) into their curriculum, and, when doing so, to strategically employ authoritative TCE language in course titles/descriptions; to centralize TCE content within required curricula; and to foreground the complicated relationship between copyright and TCEs when surveying either topic. Such integration would ensure graduates have frameworks rooted in the complexity of TCE management, which equip them to overcome corresponding challenges in their prospective workplaces. Moreover, these efforts could be tailored in tandem with future research directions, which can expand either the depth or breadth of the current research. In the former case, scholars could investigate curricula through LIS educator interviews or course syllabi analysis. For the latter, scholars could either explore what other options graduate students have for TCE education (workshops, seminars, etc.) or how current issues with TCEs are being addressed in international or global contexts.

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