Message from the Chair

Jessica Hagman

Greetings ANSS Members! As we wrap up another volunteer appointment season, I want to extend my thanks to all of you who have volunteered for new ANSS committees or agreed to continue working on existing committees. Through committee work, ANSS members use their expertise to develop and maintain connections between anthropology and sociology librarians and the disciplines we engage with. This work and the resulting web of connections supports your work as active participants in the scholarship and teaching of anthropology and sociology on your campuses.

This year, there are two additional upcoming opportunities for building on the work of ANSS in the coming years. The Liaison Committee will be recruiting new ANSS liaisons to the American Sociological Association and the Academy of Criminal Justices Sciences. Liaisons are active members of these disciplinary organizations and provide vital insight into the scholarly interests and other matters in the discipline relevant to ANSS members. Please see the update from the Liaison Committee for further information on the work of ANSS liaisons and upcoming plans for recruitment.

ANSS also has the opportunity to nominate representatives to the IFLA Social Science Libraries Section in collaboration with the Education and Behavioral Sciences Section (EBSS) and the Politics, Policy, and International Relations...
Section (PPIRS). The selected representative will hold the position from 2025-29 and will be expected to share the work of the committee with their constituent communities in ALA and make a report about section developments to the ALA International Relations Committee. The full call is in ALA Connect, with applications due May 1. Please let me know if you have any questions about the representative position or the application process.

Thank you, as always, for your continued work. I hope the remaining weeks of the academic year prove to be an excellent start to the spring and summer seasons.

ACRL Books
ACRL publishes a range of books that can help academic and research library workers worldwide develop your careers, manage your institutions, and stay on top of developments in librarianship. See recent titles below, and explore our online catalog for more timely, thought-provoking, and practical ideas and research.

- Digital Humanities in the Library, Second Edition
- Predatory Publishing and Global Scholarly Communications
- Toxic Dynamics: Disrupting, Dismantling, and Transforming Academic Library Culture
- Universal Design for Learning in Academic Libraries: Theory into Practice
- Supporting Student Parents in the Academic Library: Designing Spaces, Policies, and Services

Interested in writing for ACRL? Contact Erin Nevius, ACRL’s Content Strategist, for more information, or visit ALA’s publications website to learn more about our book publishing program.

ACRL 2025 Call for Proposals
ACRL invites proposals for the ACRL 2025 Conference to be held April 2-5, 2025, in Minneapolis and online. ACRL 2025 will be a platform for us to engage in critical conversations and explore solutions-centered approaches to the challenges facing our profession. We will focus on themes like embedded bias, inclusive excellence, and the role of technology. Whether you join us in person or virtually, we welcome you to be a part of this important conversation. Together, we can build a future where knowledge is accessible to all.

ACRL 2025 features eight session formats to suit a wide range of presentation and learning styles. Contributed paper, panel session, and workshop proposals are due June 7, 2024. Community chat, lightning talk, poster session, roundtable discussion, and virtual presentation proposals are due October 18, 2024. Complete details about ACRL 2025, including the full Call for Proposals, are available on the conference website.

RBMS 2024: Momentum (#RBMS24)
Hilton Orange County Costa Mesa, CA
June 25 - 28, 2024
REGISTER TO ATTEND IN-PERSON OR VIRTUALLY before June 14!

RBMS is your opportunity to experience trusted content and valuable connections. This conference will be a transformative experience focused on advancing equity, diversity, inclusivity, and community engagement in rare book libraries. Dive into crucial discussions on reigniting and sustaining vital initiatives, maintaining momentum, and fostering collaborative partnerships. The program agenda is available online as well as housing and transportation information. We look forward to seeing you in sunny Costa Mesa and/or online! The registration deadline is June 14.
Join your colleagues for the 2024 ALA Annual Conference & Exhibition in San Diego, California, June 27 - July 2, 2024! The world's largest library event brings together thousands of librarians and library staff, educators, authors, publishers, friends of libraries, trustees, special guests, and exhibitors! [Register today!](#)

2024 Annual meetings of ANSS will be held online. Please look for announcements of the meetings with links on ALA Connect.

**ANSS Membership Committee’s Social Events:**

**Friday, June 28, 2024**
ANSS In-Person Social: (Time and location TBD)

**July 2024**
ANSS Virtual Social: (Date and time TBD)

**ACRL at ALA Annual**

Workplace Belonging Matters: Key Insights for Library Professionals

**Saturday, June 29** 10:30 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.

Don’t miss the 2024 ACRL President’s Program, “Workplace Belonging Matters: Key Insights for Library Professionals,” on Saturday, June 29 in the San Diego Convention Center Room 29 D from 10:30am – 12:00 pm, hosted by ACRL President Beth McNeil. ACRL will also sponsor 14 section, committee, and individual programs at the conference on topics such as artificial intelligence; inclusive scholarly publishing; equitable access for the blind, visually impaired, and print-disabled students; LibParlor; setting boundaries in the workplace; challenges to humanities librarianship; and more.
Instruction and Information Literacy (IIL) committee members are meeting regularly to complete the next steps on two Framework for Information Literacy for Higher Education companion documents: one for criminology/criminal justice and one for anthropology. IIL is collaborating with the ANSS Criminal Justice/Criminology Librarians Discussion Group to plan a roundtable discussion about the companion document as part of its final draft. We hope to offer a Zoom-based session where ANSS librarians can provide feedback on the document as well as chat generally about information literacy for criminal justice courses. While IIL is currently reviewing the first full draft of the anthropology companion document, we hope to plan a similar type of event during the coming year in conjunction with the ANSS Anthropology Librarians Discussion Group.

The anthropology document is the final of the three companion documents developed by the ANSS IIL. (the first document was for sociology). Going forward, IIL will explore how these documents can support the instruction activities of librarians working with criminology/criminal justice and with anthropology. Finally, we look forward to meeting with the new members of the committee and working with them on the projects at hand.

ANSS Liaison Committee Report
Tom Diamond, Chair

Committee members Sarah Dahlen, Alison Wessel, Olivia Hobbs, and Tom Diamond met on February 8, 2024 and reviewed the liaison descriptions and suggested changes for the ASA and ACJS representatives. One major proposed change is to no longer require liaison attendance at ALA. Instead, the liaison will be invited to the virtual meetings of both the ANSS Liaison and Executive Committee. Tom will contact Jessica Hagman about the committee’s desire to advertise for both representatives and note the proposed changes. Whenever this is reviewed and approved by the Executive Board, the committee will post the information to ALA Connect for ANSS and ACRL, contact David Free at the ACRL Insider Blog, and contact Jennifer Joe the ANSS Publi-
cations Chair about posting the information to the ANSS Facebook, X/Twitter pages, and the ANSS website. AAA Liaison Sarah Dahlen presented her report on attending the AAA Annual Conference in Toronto, Ontario. Sarah posted her report to the ACRL Anthropology and Sociology Section discussion board in ALA Connect.

Membership Committee
Krystal Lewis and Wayne Bivens-Tatum, Co-Chairs

The Membership Committee has been quiet this winter, sending welcome emails to new and reinstated members and farewells to our dropped members. Membership reports have been coming from ACRL within a month or two after the close of the month, which is a significant improvement over the five to six month lag we used to see. Now that spring is in the air, we are ready to begin planning social events for the upcoming ALA Annual Conference this summer. Keep an eye on the ANSS Connect Discussion list for more details as the conference draws near.

As of February 1, 2024, ANSS had a total of 719 members (690 personal members; 29 organizational), which is a 12% increase over February 2023 (644 members). While regular membership holds steady around 400, student membership has grown nearly 50%, from 134 student members last year to 204 this year. The growth in student membership accounts for much of the increase to the overall membership.

Nominating Committee
Triveni Kuchi, Chair

The Nominating Committee is pleased to put forward Mimmo Bonnani on the 2024 ballot for ANSS Vice Chair/Chair Elect and Elizabeth Young Miller for ANSS Member-at-Large. Mimmo Bonnani is the Associate Liaison Librarian in the Social Science Division of the Fletcher Library at Arizona State University and Elizabeth Young Miller is the Social Sciences Librarian in Library and Technology Services at the E. W. Fairchild-Martindale Library at Lehigh University. Many thanks to these candidates for their willingness to run for ANSS office and for their continued service to the section. Thanks to Jylisa Kenyon for her special help in finalizing the ANSS ballot this year.

Publications Committee
Jennifer Joe, Chair

The Publications Committee met virtually on Thursday, February 8. Website manager Melissa Gonzalez reported that the ANSS website had 4906 views from July 1 – December 31, 2023. This figure is up from 4027 for the same period in 2022. November 2023 had the highest number of views. The most visited pages were the 2013 Cataloging Q&A Differences Between Bibliographic Records Created in RDA and in AACR2, with the 2006 Cataloging Q&A If an author has multiple surnames, which one is he filed under in a library catalog? and the 2021 Cataloging Q&A What is the Cataloging in Publication (CIP) program and how does it benefit libraries and publishers? virtually tied for second place.

Social media manager Jennifer Joe reported on statistics for the ANSS Facebook and Twitter accounts from the same time period. Twitter activity was down slightly from the previous six months, while Facebook activity has increased. Following up from last report, the Publications Committee has decided to continue with their current social media accounts and are not looking to replace or augment Twitter at this time.

The Publications Committee is still looking for a new Social Media Manager; if you have questions about the position, please contact Jennifer Joe at jennifer.joe@utoledo.edu.

Resource Review and Bibliography Committee
Jylisa Kenyon and Carolyn McCallum, Co-chairs

The Resource Review and Bibliography Committee (RRBC) met virtually on February 16, 2024 via Zoom. It was announced that three RRBC committee members were writing articles on online databases and tools for submission in the Spring 2024 issue of Currents. The peer review and editing process for these three articles took place in March 2024. Katherine Nelsen and Carolyn McCallum submitted reviews for the online databases Native American Tribal Histories, Series 1-4, 1813-1880 (Readex Collection) and eHRAF World Cultures, respectively. Nicole Carpenter submitted reviews for both the HistoryMakers Digital Archive, an online African American oral history collection, and TheirStory, an online oral history creation tool.
ACRL offers a suite of data products to help libraries understand the impact of their work and confidently advocate for the library's future:

**Project Outcome for Academic Libraries** provides libraries with FREE access to quick and simple patron surveys, an easy-to-use survey management tool to collect their outcomes, custom reports, and interactive data dashboards for analyzing the data, along with a variety of resources to help move libraries from implementing surveys to results-focused action.

**Benchmark: Library Metrics and Trends** houses the data from the ACRL Academic Library Trends and Statistics Annual Surveys. All academic libraries have complimentary access, which allows them to complete surveys and view select benchmarking visualizations. Subscription access provides more dashboards and detailed data.

**The Threshold Achievement Test for Information Literacy** (TATIL) is a simple, easy-to-use standardized test that measures the achievement of information literacy education outcomes, regardless of a student’s major or research focus, across four modules which address learning across all the frames in the ACRL Framework for Information Literacy for Higher Education.
Discussion Group & Liaison Reports

ANTHROPOLOGY LIBRARIANS DISCUSSION GROUP
Amy Deuink and Lara Blaine Miller, Co-Conveners

The Anthropology Discussion Group provides a forum for discussion and exchange of information among anthropology subject specialists and others interested in anthropology librarianship. Participating in the Anthropology Discussion Group provides a good opportunity to meet fellow librarians and learn more about current issues and relevant library literature.

The co-conveners welcome suggestions for an organized spring discussion. We also welcome ideas for informal discussions at any time. The discussion group co-conveners will be planning an event around the anthropology companion document in partnership with the ANSS IIL Committee soon as well. In the meantime, please email Amy at ald120@psu.edu or Lara at laramiller@arizona.edu with any suggestions for additional events.

To join the ANSS Anthropology Librarians Discussion Group discussion list, please join the group’s ALA Connect community. Please visit the Connect FAQ page for more information. Once you have joined this Connect community, you can post to the list by sending an email to ALA-ACRL-ANSS-ALDG@ConnectedCommunity.org or by creating a new post directly in the Connect community.
Sociology Librarians Discussion Group
Joyce Martin and Cynthia Orozco, Co-Conveners

Recently the Sociology Discussion Group had a conversation about evidence synthesis and the increase in use of systematic reviews in social sciences. The Sociology Discussion Group provides a forum for discussion and exchange of information among sociology subject specialists and others interested in sociology librarianship. Participating in the Sociology Discussion Group provides a good opportunity to meet fellow librarians and learn more about current issues and library literature. A discussion group is an ongoing discussion list, with few to no formal meetings. Conveners can choose to host an organized discussion, which we hope to host virtually around the same time as ALA annual.

To join the ANSS Sociology Librarians Discussion Group discussion list, please join the group’s ALA Connect community. Please visit the Connect FAQ page for more information. Once you have joined this Connect community, you can post to the list by sending an email to ALA-ACRL-ANSS-SLDG@ConnectedCommunity.org or by creating a new post directly in the Connect community.

AAA Liaison Report
Sarah Dahlen

The 2023 American Anthropological Association (AAA) meetings were held in conjunction with the annual meetings of the Canadian Anthropology Society/Société canadienne d’anthropologie (CASCA) in Toronto, ON. They took place in a hybrid format, with some presentations in person, some synchronously online, and others asynchronously online.

One of my objectives for attending the AAA meetings was to network with anthropologists and to get a sense of where the overlap might be between their interests and those of librarians. I learned that while a number of anthropologists I spoke to were particularly interested in OER, there has been a fair amount done already in this area by the Teaching Anthropology Interest Group (TAIG) and the Society for Anthropology in Community Colleges (SACC). ANSS members may be interested to know that SACC has developed two open access textbooks, one for cultural anthropology and one for biological anthropology.

My networking plan was to distribute copies of a zine I created for faculty on teaching synthesis. I distributed 26 zines, which served as good conversation starters. (I have some extras, and you can request one with this form.) Based on their positive reception, I am considering proposing a workshop on synthesis at next year’s AAA meetings.

Here is a brief summary of some of the sessions I attended that had the most relevance for librarians.

Shhh! I’m a School Librarian Using My BA in Anthropology to Radically Transform the Library.
Jain Orr, McCallum High School, Austin, TX

In this session, which is available on YouTube, librarian Jain Orr described how she has used participant observation and inductive reasoning to improve services at the high school library where she works. Her insights have led to additions such as a prayer room, comfortable furniture, soft lighting, and free menstrual products.

Transitions to Project-Based, Transdisciplinary Learning: A Guide to Creating Virtual Collaborative Learning in Undergraduate Courses.
Audrey Ricke, Indiana University

Dr. Ricke described using online tools to facilitate group projects in her in-person class in a way that is designed to reduce barriers to student participation. By providing a structure for group work, including online tools (Zoom, Google Drive, Google Chat) and a planning contract (group roles, communication plan, and ways to negotiate conflict), she sets up students for success with their group work.

UX is Not Dead, ChatGPT is Not Killing it: Embracing Conversational User Experience
Elizabeth Rodwell, University of Houston

This presentation argued that UX is more important than ever, with a “human-in-the-loop” necessary for the thoughtful design of chatbots. Engineers must partner with social scientists (as experts in the human/technology relationship) to design chatbots that do not reproduce existing power dynamics and inequities.
Affective Encounters: Unpacking Colonial Archives, Museums, and the Captured Displayed Object.
Aarzoo Singh

This presenter gave several examples of museum exhibits that displayed objects likely acquired through colonial violence with no acknowledgement of that acquisition history. In this way, museums reinforce their national narratives while ignoring the legacies of colonialism.

In addition to many interesting presentations, I also attended a reception for the journal Anthropology Now. I learned that this publication is a venue for professional anthropologists to present their research to an audience of educated laypeople (it was compared to Psychology Today). It is a peer-reviewed publication, but not scholarly in the sense that it is not written for other anthropologists. Articles are free of jargon and shorter than many scholarly articles, making them accessible for undergraduate readers.

As always, I welcome your thoughts on how I can best facilitate collaboration between ACRL and AAA, and on where the interests of librarians and anthropologists overlap. Please email me at sdahlen@csumb.edu.

ACRL’s RoadShow program opens the door for academic and research libraries to bring high quality professional development directly to their campus, chapter, or consortium at an affordable cost. Day-long traveling workshops and new online experiences have been designed to help academic library professionals tackle the greatest issues facing the profession today. RoadShow topics align with ACRL’s strategic goals, ensuring a commitment to leading academic and research librarians in advancing learning and transforming scholarship.

Led by experts in the field, ACRL’s traveling and virtual RoadShow workshops are designed to engage participants and help academic librarians learn new skills and strengthen existing competencies to tackle the greatest issues facing the profession today. ACRL RoadShows offer hosts a wealth of benefits, including:

- High quality curriculum delivered by expert presenters
- A full day of learning, engagement, and interactivity with colleagues in your field.
- Tools, materials, and resources you can adapt to your own work.
- Training for up to 100 participants.
- A workshop evaluation summary report to measure success and help you plan for next steps.

Check out the six RoadShow topics!
Accessible Oral Histories: Research and Creation

Oral histories are a precious resource that enable us to better understand a time, a place, or a culture. To hear firsthand what the environment felt like, how the phenomenon affected everyday life, and why the ripple effects are still felt in today's society and culture are valuable perspectives to preserve for future generations.

The preservation of stories has become an increasingly interesting area of primary research and instruction in academia (from early ages to the university archives). Ellen Swain argued over 20 years ago that collaboration among archivists and librarians to document and provide access to oral histories would be paramount. The video and audio quality of testimonials and interviews increased with broader access to higher-end technology in the latter half of the last century. As a result, we've enjoyed increased attention to voices within the Black, Indigenous, People of Color (BIPOC) populations. This

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Reviewed: March 2024
URLs: https://theirstory.io and https://www.thehistorymakers.org/

Costs: Vary by institution. TheirStory: Has a base rate of $80 per recorded hour, and varies per subscription level. HistoryMakers Digital Archive: An individual membership or DigitalMaker is $30 per month/$300 per year. There is a STEM subgroup for The ScienceMakers that individuals can access for free through a BasicMaker account. The subscription price for an academic institution license is based on FTE.
article explores both a specific oral history resource and an up-and-coming tool to facilitate the creation process.

TheirStory
https://theirstory.io

Oral history creation, whether at the family, community, or institutional scale, requires recording tools. Since 2018 TheirStory has provided one of those tools, and its website explains that the platform was created “to collect, preserve, and engage with the stories that make us.”

At many research institutions, the activities and tools needed to produce oral histories are so disconnected that it may discourage projects of this kind. TheirStory attempts to remove some of these barriers by connecting the processes of audio and video production, transcription, and dissemination through a single vendor. This level of streamlining the oral history collection process has widened the eyes of current practitioners, providing them with a toolset they might use or at least review. Using a product like TheirStory helps eliminate the need for multiple services, like media services for audio, outsourcing transcript creation, and hosting a website for dissemination of the work.

Thinking through another aspect of creating a product with varying voices, we need to be mindful of who is taking ownership of these stories. As mentioned in the TheirStory’s FAQ, it is oral history best practice to attach ownership to the individuals in the testimonial. Although individual collections, like families, can handle ownership in various ways, academic collections should request deeds of gift, which can be tracked within the TheirStory platform for each interview.

Additionally, TheirStory strives to use the most universal technology standards in creating such content, which allows for exporting to personal or institutional websites with ease. Within the TheirStory platform, the transcript displays beside the video, which is incredibly useful for accessibility and easy viewing. (For a demonstration, see an Overview on YouTube.)

From starting a project, setting up an interview, emailing participants, video creation, transcription, editing, to sharing clips and final results, this product can be a lifesaver. Like many up-and-coming technology-focused companies, future revisions and upgrades are also planned for continued impact and improvements in the oral history space.

Several example projects demonstrate the tool’s use. In March 2024, the Los Angeles Public Library collected stories about what the library means to their community to celebrate its 150 year anniversary.

A shared collection is also available at the University of Kentucky Libraries Louie B. Nunn Center for Oral History. A selected interview from their Peace Corps collection (see Figure 1) shows the segmented clips, like a table of contents, with title descriptions, keywords, and transcripts, allowing researchers to scan and view the most pertinent sections of an interview upfront.

Figure 1. Peace Corps collection at the University of Kentucky Libraries Louie B. Nunn Center for Oral History; Interview with Caitlin Dickson
The team at TheirStory created a tutorials page to help show you the way (see Figure 2). Video tutorials include best practices in preparing for an interview session, indexing, and how to pull out key quotes clips.

The cost is another story (pun intended!). The standard base cost for TheirStory’s platform is $80 per recorded hour.

Figure 2. Video tutorials within the TheirStory platform

**History Makers**

[https://www.thehistorymakers.org/](https://www.thehistorymakers.org/)

One example of an oral history collection marketed to academic institutions is the HistoryMakers Digital Archive, which claims to be the largest digital repository for the Black experience. A nonprofit organization, The HistoryMakers collaborates with Carnegie Mellon University to provide the HistoryMakers Digital Archive for library subscription.

According to its website, “The HistoryMakers was founded to address the lack of documentation and preservation of the African American historical record. Prior to the start of interviews in 2000, there was only one large-scale methodic attempt during the 20th century to capture African American history from a first-person perspective – the WPA Slave Narratives, housed at the Library of Congress.” The HistoryMakers Digital Archive attempts to capture this collective voice in the modern era. Researchers, biographers, and the general public alike will find stories about a time or phenomenon documented from personal perspective. Each of the individual stories unveils a glimpse into the insights of various upbringings and Black culture.

The founder, Julieanna Richardson, has been spearheading the effort to collect untold African American histories since 1999. The forethought that went into the initial planning has created a metadata-rich collection with search capabilities through various facets, such as the “Maker” category and place (US mapping) as well as the more standard gender, job type, and decade of birth. Maker categories depict a variety of fields that are most prominent within an individual’s life or career. The makers are categorized within education, civic, media, business, art, political, law, science, music, medical, religion, military, entertainment, sports, or style.

**Search**

A quick search in the Maker Directory for “librarian” yields 11 HistoryMakers, including Carla Hayden, interviewed (2010) prior to her 2016 nomination to the Librarian of Congress (see Figure 3).
The homepage contains a ticker with the site's statistics: "150,153 stories are assembled here from life oral history interviews with 2,712 historically significant African Americans as of March 5, 2024."

Diving into these numerous stories can be guided by the Topic Search, found in the top menu. Topic Search displays themes and context within Historical Context, Biographical Themes and Interview Qualities, as seen in Figure 4, which shows results for Intra-Racial Relations, Mentors, and Great Story tags. The example search revealed that seven stories matched these selections.
Stories

Once you are on a HistoryMaker profile, there are tabs for the interviewee’s full biography and the digital archive containing their stories (also called Clips) on topics. Many “Makers” also have a Digital Library that hosts photographs and documents supporting their stories. Researchers may learn more about the interviewee’s background and find corresponding stories connecting back to part(s) of their lives. The stories can be viewed through a grid (default), a list, or a map; additionally there is a simple search bar to “Search this person’s stories” to directly filter the results.

For example, when we search for the mention of “California” in Bill T. Jones PoliticalMaker, there are five matched stories. To further assist early researchers, each story is accompanied by the transcript where the search term is bolded and a citation for the respective clip. The story page also has quick links on the frame of the video to the “Previous Match” and the “Next Match” based on your prior search parameters.

The Maker Directory is freely available to browse, and several clips are available for public viewing. The following links will open on the interviewee’s respective biographies, and the next tab over toward the top reads “Digital Archive,” where you will find the stories and transcripts:

- EducationMakers Joanne Berger-Sweeney
- EntertainmentMaker James Avery
- MusicMaker Eileen Tate Cline
- PoliticalMakers The Honorable Louis Stokes
Advanced Search

A story advanced search allows keyword retrieval of all transcripts or within a single Maker profile. Researchers may comb through these testimonials with incredible accuracy due to the site’s timestamp, keyword, and location filter metadata (see Figure 6). Advanced search also includes special character descriptions and search syntax that may aid more specific research on this page.

In contrast, a biography advanced search has a default set of chosen fields: last name, description, and preferred name (see Figure 7). To keep each field, leave the check mark. Alternative fields can be marked to search accession, first name, and biography.

Related Resources

A related oral history product that may also be of interest and available for academic purchase is the collections from the Shoah Foundation’s Visual History Archive, documenting testimonies from firsthand experience with genocide, including the recent attacks in Gaza. This documentation effort is devastating but necessary work. Many academic libraries and archives host freely accessible collections containing, or only consisting of, oral histories. One such example is the PrisonPandemic Project from University of California, Irvine that states that “By providing a digital archive of stories, UCI PrisonPandemic™ is bringing greater transparency to the COVID-19 crisis in prisons and jails.” These resources, like The HistoryMakers and TheirStory, are facilitating the collection and preservation of oral histories for future generations.

Voices should be heard, and stories should be shared. By incorporating oral histories into our collective memory, we can better meet the future together with insight and empathy.
Introduction and History

The importance of Human Relations Area Files (HRAF) to researchers and scholars in cultural anthropology cannot be overstated. It has become a robust and vital resource. According to HRAF’s "About Page," "Its mission is to promote understanding of cultural diversity and commonality in the past and present. To accomplish this mission, HRAF produces scholarly resources and infrastructure for research, teaching and learning, and supports and conducts original research on cross-cultural variation" (Human Relations Area Files [HRAF], 2024).

HRAF was formally established at Yale University in 1949 although its real beginning occurred "In the 1930s, [when] behavioral scientists at Yale’s Institute of Human Relations started to develop a collection of cultural materials classified by subject at the paragraph-level enabling quick access to research materials" (HRAF, 2024). The product of these collective endeavors was the Cross-Cultural Survey that later became known as the HRAF Collection of Ethnography (CE).
HRAF’s CE was produced and received by its member institutions in various formats along the way. First, there was paper followed by microfiche, which ceased production in 1994. Then, beginning in April 1995, CD-ROMs delivered the CE full-text to users. In 1997, the University of Michigan’s Digital Library Production Service commenced hosting HRAF’s first online version of its CE, and in February 2008, HRAF renamed CE to eHRAF World Cultures (WC) and took over hosting the database. HRAF created an updated version of WC that went live in July 2013. The 2013 WC interface was officially sunsetting on July 31, 2023, and was replaced the following day with a completely new interface, features, and system improvements. Based on feedback from both seasoned and novice users of WC, the database’s newest iteration and look have been well received (HRAF, 2024).

Given its impressive longevity and importance, I felt it would be interesting and informative to provide readers a brief overview of this impressive organization and its Collection of Ethnography (CE) now known as eHRAF World Cultures (WC). This review focuses on the 2023 updated version of WC and discusses its content, coverage, organization, features, and searching/browsing capabilities. It also includes my final impressions and thoughts about the database itself (Figure 1).

Content and Coverage
The ethnographic information collected and retained in the WC database is organized by cultures. As of May 2022, per HRAF’s FAQ page, it contains 6,676 documents (769,002 pages) for 361 cultures. Examples of documents indexed in WC’s vast collection of ethnographic materials include monographs, journal articles, manuscripts, and dissertations. Expansion of WC’s content is ongoing with the annual addition of new cultures and documents to the database, with the result that “About 25% is new ethnographic material and the remaining material is converted from HRAF’s previous microfiche collection for the cultures added to eHRAF” (HRAF, 2024).

Organization and Special Features
The creation and utilization of two in-house classification systems, one for cultures and the other for topical subjects, is just one of the distinctive features of the core anthropological database eHRAF World Cultures. The Outline of World Cultures (OWC), a unique identifier to every culture and ethnic group included in the database which is categorically arranged by regions, subregions, and subsistence types. The Outline of Cultural Materials (OCM), a controlled vocabulary for topical subject headings, “serves two primary purposes: first, to assist scholars in classifying and annotating cultural materials for all societies; and, second, to aid researchers in readily locating material pertinent to their interests” (eHRAF World Cultures [WC], 2023). Both classification systems are adept with cross-referencing user input subject terms and names to the preferred ones included in the OCM and OWC, respectively. This ability to cross-reference alone negates the idea that for one to effectively

Figure 1. Screenshot of eHRAF World Cultures homepage and its search box and three options for browsing.
use this highly specialized anthropological database, one must have prerequisite knowledge of the database’s controlled vocabulary (WC, 2023).

The subject indexing that is undertaken for each text, paragraph by paragraph, is WC’s most unique feature. Based on my knowledge and experience, this feature alone is not provided in other general and discipline-specific academic databases. This monumental task is accomplished through the application of OCM identifiers by HRAF anthropologists, “making it ideal for both exploratory, in-depth cultural research, and cross-cultural comparisons” (HRAF, 2024).

Additionally, WC offers four options of sampling that users may employ during their research as needed. They are: Ethnographic Atlas Sample (EA), Probability Sample Files (PSF), Simple Random Sample (SRS), and Standard Cross-Cultural Sample (SCCS). Detailed information about sampling is available on the "Basic Guide to Cross-Cultural Research."

**Searching and Browsing**

On the WC homepage, researchers have the option to perform a search (formerly known as a "Basic Search" in the database’s previous version) or an advanced search in the search box beneath the database’s name. Three options to individually browse cultures, subjects, or documents is presented at the top of the homepage on the right side (Figure 1). If a researcher has never used WC before, this librarian highly recommends viewing the video tutorials as well as clicking on the “Search Examples” box to learn how to construct an appropriate and successful advanced search strategy for one’s topic. Both are located on the HRAF organization’s Help page. Any terms entered when searching for a topic in WC are cross-referenced against the OCW and OCM thesauri so that relevant search results will be returned to a researcher.

**Advanced Searching**

Advanced searching in this highly specialized anthropological database is very different and more complex than advanced searching in a database hosted by either EBSCO or ProQuest. In constructing an advanced search strategy, a researcher must select one or more cultures and subjects and, if desired, add keywords and select which Boolean operator, AND or OR, to use in the search (Figure 2). A second subject/keyword line may be added to the search strategy by clicking on the plus sign beside the keyword box and selecting a Boolean operator (AND, OR, or NOT) to connect the two lines. Quotation marks may be utilized for phrase searching, and the question mark (?) or asterisk (*) symbols may be utilized to truncate the stem of a word so that variations for a particular word will be included in the search and retrieved results. Detailed information on search syntax is available on the “Search Syntax Page” in WC’s “eHRAF User Guide.”
One can either type in the name of a culture or select multiple cultures to search. Clicking on "Lookup and search for more cultures" causes a pop-up box to display in which one can browse cultures via the A-Z index or by region, and add their selection(s) to the “Select Cultures” box. Figure 3 displays my search for a culture in the Eastern Woodlands subregion of North America.

After selecting a culture to research, a similar process is used when selecting and adding subject terms to the “Select Subjects” box. One can start typing in a subject or click on the phrase “Lookup and search for more subjects”, whereby a pop-up box presents three options to browse subjects via the A-Z index, by major subjects, or by an OCM identifier. Figure 4 displays my search for a subject term by browsing major subjects and selecting “Dance” which is
considered to be a narrower term under the broad subject category “Art” which falls under the broader subject category of “Arts”.

After adding “ceremon*” to the keyword box, my final advanced search strategy in WC as shown in Figure 5 was: cultures: “Iroquois” AND (subjects: “dance” AND text: ceremon*). My search results were presented as “98 paragraphs in 18 documents across 1 cultures” (WC, 2023).

A box to the left of the results allows a researcher to refine their search with various filter options including publication date, document type, and by series. Results have been formatted as a list of individual paragraphs and are sorted by relevance. These preferences are now customizable by selecting one of the available options listed under both “View As” and “Sort By” as displayed on the right directly above the results.

 Appearing directly above the search results formatting options are three “Search Insights” tools, a new feature that “offer[s] additional options for visualizing and drilling down through results sets” (HRAF, 2024). Labeled as “Result Table,” “Cloud Overview,” and “Map,” these tools help researchers “explore patterns in the search results data” that they retrieved (HRAF, 2024).

Researchers can expand all search results at once by clicking the middle button with both up and down arrows directly above the results list or view individually one-by-one as shown in Figure 5. Expanding a search result (Figure 6) gives a researcher the complete view of the paragraph in which their keywords and subject terms are highlighted in yellow. Each expanded box includes the OWC culture name/identifier and the culture’s region, subregion, and subsistence type. Below that is the title of the document and the page number from whence the paragraph originally appears as well as information pertaining to the document’s author, publication date, and series. To the right of the text in red are hyperlinked 3-digit codes with both one word and multi-word identifiers (i.e., subject headings) from the OCM.
Directly below the paragraph, one can click on “Full Context” to access the complete document which has been indexed by subject headings (i.e., OCM identifiers) at the paragraph level (Figure 7). By clicking on “Cite,” one can view how this citation should be formatted based on four different citation styles and also export the citation to select bibliographic citation management software programs. An additional new feature of WC is “Notebooks,” which allows paragraph search results to be saved, organized, annotated, and shared (HRAF, 2024). To utilize the “Notebooks” feature, one must create a free personal eHRAF account and be signed into it. This account is independent of one’s institutional access to WC via their affiliation with a HRAF member institution. Detailed information on creating and viewing “Notebooks” is available on the “Creating and Viewing Notebooks Page.”

Browsing

By clicking on the phrase “Browse Cultures,” one is able to search and view the multiple culture collections indexed therein utilizing either the “Search Culture Index” box or filter options on the left to refine their search by region, subsistence type, or samples. One can also choose whether to hide or display non-preferred culture names when conducting a search by clicking on the “Use Fors” toggle. The default setting is to display only a culture’s preferred name. Figure 8 displays results retrieved from “Browse Cultures” after selecting North America, Eastern Woodlands, and Horticulturists under the filters, regions and subsistence types respectively, as well as enabling the “Use Fors” toggle to show the preferred and non-preferred names of a culture.

A close-up of the results as seen in Figure 9 displays that Akwesasne and Afro-Seminole are the non-preferred names for Iroquois and Seminole respectively, and that the Iroquois culture collection contains 54 documents and the Seminole collection contains 40 documents. The OWC identifiers for the Iroquois (Akwesasne) and Seminole (Afro-Seminole) are NM09 and NN16, respectively.
ADAPTATIONS OF LONGHOUSE EVENTS

Among the commonest prescriptions are those drawn from the Longhouse ceremonies and events. In such a case the fortuneteller or the dream specifies that the patient needs one or more of the familiar Longhouse rituals, and also specifies what food is to be served the participants in the dining. None of these rituals is a function of a special society, but each one belongs to the common experience of the Longhouse community, and any person who is able to duplicate the performance as seen in the Longhouse may be called upon to "help."

Each of the four sacred rituals—the Feather Dance, the Skin Dance, and the Bowl Game (pp. 166-72 supra) is often prescribed. When this happens the patient may wait until Midwinter and pass his ceremony in the Longhouse on Pass Dance Day, providing least foods, if it is the first time he "passes" the ritual. Usually, however, he tries to his home at night the personnel capable of performing the ceremony, preferably though not necessarily including members of the opposite moiety, Indian costume, which is appropriate in the Longhouse for these ceremonies, is not necessary for the medicinal performance at home, unless specifically demanded by the fortuneteller. In the case of the Skin Dance and the Feather Dance it is ordinarily not necessary to perform the complete set for the sake of the patient, and if the Bowl Game is played, only 20 to 30 leaves are used. In the case of the Bowl Game the patient ought to have made for him a bowl, peach-pit sized.

Figure 7. Screenshot of a full text document indexed by subject at paragraph level

Figure 8. Screenshot of results retrieved from "Browse Cultures" using two filter options and enabling "Use For"
After selecting a culture to further explore and clicking on the phrase “Full Profile,” users then proceed to that culture’s individual file. Per the “Browse Cultures Page” in the WC database, “Each culture file contains a comprehensive culture profile including a collection description, culture summary, list of documents, and indexing notes from HRAF analysts” (WC, 2023). Once inside the culture’s file, users can navigate the file by using the three buttons to the right of the culture’s name. A culture summary of the Iroquois and a “Documents” button for displaying a list of all of the ethnographic documents pertaining to the Iroquois culture is shown in Figure 10.
To the right of the text in red are hyperlinked 3-digit codes with either a one word or multi-word identifier (i.e., subject headings) from the OCM. By clicking on either the 3-digit code or identifier, a pop-up box appears from the right containing a scope note (i.e., the definition and use of a term in a controlled vocabulary), the OCM 3-digit code, and red hyperlinked OCM identifiers and their non-hyperlinked respective 3-digit codes for both broader and related terms. The scope note and broader and related terms for the OCM identifier “131 Location” is shown in Figure 11. The pop-up box also presents to a researcher the option to add the subject heading “Location” to a search.

Figure 11: Screenshot of scope note and broader and related terms for OCM identifier “131 Location”

Figure 12 displays an abstract and some of the bibliographic information for the book Conservatism among the Iroquois at Six Nations Reserve written by Annemarie Shimony and published in 1961. This title is one of 54 documents in the WC’s Iroquois culture collection.

Figure 12: Screenshot of bibliographic information for book included in the Iroquois culture’s document collection
Final Impressions and Thoughts

In closing, I find eHRAF World Cultures to be one of the most impressive and unique databases I’ve ever used in my career in librarianship. Of note is its transitions in various formats over time, beginning in the 1930s as files on paper to later becoming one of the core online databases in the field of anthropology. WC’s longevity and continuous development and reinvention demonstrates that the value of the information and documents contained therein is recognized by scholars and researchers. While it is quite complex to use, its unique organization of world cultures into individual groups, regions, and subsistence types and the subject indexing assigned to individual ethnographic documents at the paragraph level by anthropologists utilizing two in-house developed thesauri (i.e., OWC, OCM) with controlled vocabularies was well thought out by the original creators and has stood the test of time. It enables researchers to more readily locate information regarding a specific culture’s religion, diet, rituals, etc. However, there is a learning curve for users of this one-of-a-kind, specialized database in searching; navigating and interpreting results retrieved; gaining an understanding of the thesauri used and the sampling available for cross-cultural comparisons, and so much more that I didn’t cover in this review. Online tutorials and reference materials are available to assist users to effectively learn, use, and master the database’s organizational and unique features. One suggestion I do have for this database is that the video tutorials need updating to reflect the updated look and new enhancements of the 2023 version of the WC database.

As a cataloger, my knowledge about and daily use of discipline-specific online databases is limited, but I am unaware of any other database that has the organization, features, and capabilities that comprise WC, and I don’t know how one could objectively and fairly compare this database to another. Exploring and reviewing WC have piqued my interest in learning more about HRAF’s other online database, eHRAF Archaeology.

Cost

Obtaining access to HRAF’s online ethnographic database, eHRAF World Cultures, requires that an educational institution (e.g., community college, 4-year college or university) become a Regular Associate Member. Membership fees differ in cost depending on the type of institution and its library’s annual material expenditures budget for the preceding academic year. Salary expenditures are disregarded in this figure. A Consortia Associate Membership is available to educational institutions that belong to an officially recognized consortium. An institution’s preceding academic year’s FTE (full-time equivalency) determines the cost of annual membership. Special categories of membership to HRAF are also available to unaffiliated researchers, public libraries, museums, high schools, Native American institutions, and countries, and membership fees vary by category. Detailed information on memberships and pricing is available at HRAF’s “Membership, Trials & Dues” page.

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Native American Tribal Histories, Series 1-4, 1813-1880

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Reviewed: January 2024
Publisher: Readex
URL: https://www.readex.com/products/native-american-tribal-histories-series-1-4-1813-1880
Pricing: One time cost with annual hosting fee. Pricing information can be obtained from Readex.

Overview
Native American Tribal Histories, Series 1-4, 1813-1880 is a collection of four databases produced by Readex. The opening page, search interface, and filter options are similar to other Readex collections, with some differences.

Coverage
The collection contains the complete records of the Bureau of Indian Affairs superintendents from 1813-1880, including correspondence and annual reports. Throughout the 19th century, Indian Agents reported to Office of Indian Affairs superintendents. The superintendency jurisdictions covered specific territories or states which shifted over time. This system was dismantled with the last superintendency closing in 1878.

Many of the superintendent records have been digitized from microform and are freely available through the National Archives & Records Administration (NARA) catalog. However, they are locked inside large folders of jpeg files, making them difficult to search.

The majority of the Treaty period (1778-1871) is covered, including the Indian Removal Act, the Indian Appropriations...
tions Act, the Sand Creek Massacre, the Treaty of Fort Laramie, and the South Dakota gold rush. Coverage ends with the very first year of the Allotment and Attempted Assimilation period when the first students attended the Carlisle Indian Industrial School.

The Readex collection was finished in November 2023 and contains 71,041 items. Typed documents have been scanned with optical character recognition software and are full text searchable on a page by page basis. Handwritten documents do not offer full text searching, however, all documents are thoroughly indexed. According to Readex, the indexed records contain:

- 1038 tribe names, many with variants
- 172 agencies, many of which also have variant names
- 407 treaties
- 2655 personal names, including many names of Native persons not previously found online

Search interface

The Home page (see Figure 1) offers a standard search bar with options to keyword search all text or by tribe, date, place or region, superintendency, agency name, treaty, topic, event, person, title, fort/company/mine, author, publication category, NARA series, NARA roll number, department name, record group title, record group number, publisher, place of publication, language, citation text, or content notes. In lieu of an explicitly stated “advanced search” button or link, the advanced search is built into the basic search interface with the ability to add rows and remove rows to your initial search (see Figure 2). When adding a row, a dropdown menu appears with the options “and,” “or,” and “not;” a dropdown menu for facet; and the search bar for word or term.

Figure 1: Home page of Native American Tribal Histories
Limiters

Limiters available in the sidebar are: tribe name; decade; year; place or region; superintendency; agency; treaty; topic; event; person; fort, company, mine; author; publication category; NARA roll number; and database (see Figure 3). The type of limiter is listed with a plus sign next to it. Clicking on the plus sign expands the selection to the four options with the highest number of results and a link for “more options.” Clicking on “more options” opens a window listing all options (see Figure 4). From this window it is possible to select all or one or more options by clicking the checkboxes. It is also possible to sort the options by alphabetical order or number of results.

Adding to the search capabilities of the database are the inclusion of a very broad range of tribe and treaty variant names in the detailed descriptions.
Figure 5: Search results short entries with window opened by clicking “View More Details”

Item display
The item-level display page includes forward and back arrows at the top to allow for easy scanning to the next item on the results list. Beneath that is the title of the document and date. Below that is a toolbar that includes a drop-down for selecting what page to view, a previous and next page arrow, view details, citation generator, download button, print button, and email button. The download button offers the option to download to your computer or save the page to Google Drive. It is also possible to select multiple pages or a specific page range. The print function allows for printing the full page or a clip of the page.

The page viewer is large, taking up about 3/4ths of the page width. Controls at the top of the viewer include zoom in, zoom out, full screen, rotate right, and viewer help. The viewer help button opens a window detailing the keyboard and mouse controls. There is a small page navigation window that sits on the right side of the screen between the page viewer and page thumbnail bar (see Figure 6). It is possible to toggle the page navigation window off and on. It is possible to move the page within the page viewer by clicking and dragging in the page viewer or clicking and dragging the highlighted box in the page navigation window. The page thumbnail bar offers another way to move from page to page within a document. The thumbnail bar can be closed to increase the width of the page viewer.
The citation generator creates a formatted copy and pasteable citation in MLA, APA, Chicago Manual of Style, or Turabian. The citation is automatically copied to the clipboard when the citation style is selected. There is also an option to export an RIS.txt file. There is a disclaimer appearing above the citation window stating, “Always check automatically generated citations against the official manual or guide.”

Who will find it useful?
Researchers of U.S. history; Indigenous, American Indian, or Native American studies; legal studies, anthropology, and historical sociology will find this database immensely useful.

Issues
The materials included in the database have been scanned to a high resolution. While typed documents have been OCR’ed, the handwritten documents do not include transcriptions, which limits full text searching of the vast majority of the database to the information included in the detailed descriptions.

Closing and recommendation
The importance of these records to scholars in a variety of disciplines cannot be overstated. The superintendent records are some of the richest records we have of interactions between local Native Americans and the United States government during an incredibly important period that shaped government relations and impacted Native Americans in ways still seen and felt today. This database opens up those records and makes them accessible to scholars, researchers, and students in a thoughtful and useful manner. If your institution has researchers focusing on this era of U.S. history, colonialism or colonization, I highly recommend considering this collection for your library.

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