

The State of Critical Indigenous Studies Liaison Librarianship: A Landscape Analysis

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This study examines the overlapping presence of Critical Indigenous Studies (CIS) programs and CIS liaison librarians at large, research-oriented colleges and universities in the United States and Canada. This landscape analysis investigates current trends in academic libraries' support, vis-à-vis liaison librarianship, of Critical Indigenous Studies programs, as well as Indigenous library patrons. Initial findings suggest that while an increasing number of North American colleges and universities are establishing CIS programs, library support in the form of liaison librarianship lags behind. The article concludes with large-scale policy questions and recommendations for academic libraries.

Introduction

The modern field of Critical Indigenous Studies (CIS) emerged from the Indigenous activism of the 1960s, holding its first conference at Princeton in 1970. CIS scholars rejected the supposed objectivity of other academic disciplines, especially those historically (and currently) involved in the colonial work of studying and teaching about Indigenous populations, which these disciplines defined as “The Other,” for the benefit of the colonizer. Instead, CIS scholarship centers Indigenous Knowledge (IK), belief systems, and leadership (Cook-Lynn, 1997). CIS programs were not and are not academically isolated but are instead actively involved in the “preservation and development” of Native cultures (Morris, 1986).

This emergence of such a new, inherently interdisciplinary field—one that departs radically from traditional academic epistemologies and research practices—posed, and remains, a challenge for libraries. The field requires approaches to collection development, instruction, and outreach informed by Indigenous practices and epistemologies. Liaison and subject specialty librarianship is the main way many libraries support the research and teaching of faculty and students in particular disciplines. In this model, librarians typically have an assigned set of liaison departments with which they build relationships while developing knowledge of these subjects' unique library needs. In the best cases, liaison librarians build trusting relationships, teach discipline specific information literacy, and develop targeted collections for

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students and faculty in their subject areas. In this landscape analysis, we survey the state of CIS programs and library support at major colleges and universities, guided by the following questions: Where and in what kinds of universities are CIS programs found? Which libraries have risen to the challenge posed by CIS programs by supporting them with librarians who have subject matter expertise?

Literature Review

In the last 25 years, many college and university libraries followed broader academic movements by calling first for multiculturalism and diversity, as well as principles of inclusion, equitable access, and decolonization (Alexander, 2013; Gosart, 2021). Many libraries align this work within their universities' umbrella policies to support specific demographics such as Indigenous, Black/African American, and Asian American and Pacific Islander student populations, (Roy et al., 2021; Haykal & Crabtree, 2021; Bucy, 2022; Hare & Abbott, 2015; Stieglitz, 2020). Academic libraries often lend their support to historically marginalized populations through liaison librarianship programs and collection development policies.

Liaison librarianship generally focuses on "engagement, collection work, research support, teaching and learning, [and] scholarly communications," as well as data management and bibliometrics (Arendt & Peacemaker, 2023). There is not, however, a "single set of services" that is universally understood as fundamental liaison responsibilities (Arendt & Peacemaker, 2023), particularly for those librarians' whose subject areas include comparatively new disciplines or area studies. Librarians who are responsible for supporting area or cultural studies centers and departments must consistently consider "the implications of supporting research that transcends boundaries between individual countries, disciplines, and languages" (Pitman, 2015). For the purposes of this research, area and cultural studies is defined as the multidisciplinary study of specific regions of the world and the cultural communities associated with or inhabit them (Pitman, 2015). Examples of these types of programs in U.S. colleges and universities include but are not limited to Critical Indigenous Studies; African and African American Studies; Latinx and Chicano Studies; Jewish and Judaica Studies.

Liaison librarianship is often defined by the building of relationships with faculty and students. The literature consistently stresses the value of this relationship building and interaction as core to evolving services to meet changing user needs (Kuchi, 2022; Ochola & Jones, 2001; Rodwell & Fairbairn, 2008; Thull & Hansen, 2009). Kuchi compares liaison services favorably to other more transactional library services; liaisons "support, empower, enhance, collaborate" (2022). After the University of Arizona reorganized away from having assigned liaisons, the library lost connections with students and faculty (Elliott et al., 2013). Through a labor-intensive study they were able to gather faculty needs; however, the university was unable to offer a substitute for liaison-built relationships with faculty and students. A range of studies have found that faculty value liaison librarian services (Cooke et al., 2011; Mozenter et al., 2000; Tennant et al., 2006; Yang, 2000). Arendt and Lotts conducted a survey of liaisons and their faculty to match perceptions. In their study, faculty who knew they had a liaison were 10% more likely to be satisfied with the library compared to faculty who weren't sure if they had a liaison. The survey also assessed how valuable faculty found different types of liaison services, including collection development, communication about the library, and library instruction among many others. It found that large majorities of faculty valued almost

all services offered by liaisons. For example, 75% of faculty thought in-class library instruction to be very important or important, and 70% of faculty found integration of information literacy into the curriculum to be important (Arendt & Lotts, 2012).

The literature demonstrates that liaisons' collaborative relationship building creates effective two-way communication, allowing libraries to more effectively understand and support the needs of their users, as well as informing teaching faculty about the services and resources of the library. Trust and relationship-building may be especially important for students and faculty of color (Patterson Silver Wolf et al., 2019). Becks' interviews of faculty of color found that many of their research areas were not well covered by library collections and that instead they had built personal collections and workarounds to be able to conduct their research (2023). Before these interviews, their needs had been unidentified and unmet. Thus faculty, and especially faculty of color, working in areas without an assigned liaison are likely to be underserved by their library, especially in libraries that otherwise operate through a liaison model. In addition, such faculty may not be aware that they are being underserved due to lack of communication and education around what the library can offer.

Librarians serving area and cultural studies departments and disciplines must not only successfully carry out general liaison responsibilities, as mentioned, but also establish a baseline of trust and mutual understanding between the scholarly community and the university libraries (Pitman, 2015). For many librarians working with historically marginalized patrons and fields of study, there are decades—if not centuries—of mistrust from historic policies of colonization and segregation, in both access and collection development (Bucy, 2022; Hare & Abbott, 2015; Stieglitz, 2020; Dudley & Blackbird, 2021; Pun et al., 2021).

Liaison librarians working with Indigenous populations and Indigenous Studies programs have a unique opportunity to shape the "academic library as a partner of Indigenous communities, rather than uncritically reinforcing and reproducing the values of the dominant society" (Dudley & Blackbird, 2021). Indigenous liaisons have addressed libraries' historical complicity in colonization and reframed their libraries' relationships with Indigenous communities in several key ways including enhancing access to library collections; creating library research guides highlighting Indigenous resources within collections; correcting harmful and inaccurate cataloging terminology; reorganizing Indigenous Knowledge (IK) within existing collections to better reflect Indigenous ways of knowing; collaborating with Indigenous students to provide resources and support tailored to their needs; ensuring that representations of Indigenous people in libraries are respectful, accurate, and accessible; and training library staff to provide culturally competent service and support (Pun et al., 2021; Dudley & Blackbird, 2021; Bucy, 2022; Hare & Abbott, 2015; Stieglitz, 2020).

Notably, most of these endeavors have been implemented (to varying degrees of success) and assessed by libraries and librarians in Canadian, Australian, and New Zealand institutions, in part due to national legislation surrounding Indigenous advocacy and reconciliation efforts (Gosart, 2021; Dudley & Blackbird, 2021; Bucy, 2022; Hare & Abbott, 2015; Stieglitz, 2020). Further, Indigenous librarianship, which "examines how the cultural practices, empirical conditions, and political aspirations of Indigenous communities shape the notion of knowledge, and the practices of knowledge organization and management," offers a path forward for all librarians to "foster procedures and norms to guide responsible and respectful care for materials with Indigenous content that are preserved outside of Indigenous communities" (Gosart, 2021).

Methodology

Data Collection

To address the guiding questions for this survey, key pieces of data were identified as necessary to the information we were seeking to quantify: the presence of liaison librarianship programs; specific CIS liaison librarians; and academic CIS programs or departments. We examined the college and university websites that listed degree programs—as well as majors, minors, concentrations, and certificate programs—to identify the type of CIS curriculum available to students. We then assessed the corresponding libraries' web pages for lists of liaison librarians and their supporting subject areas. Following the collection of these data points, we then collected key demographic details for each institution including enrollment size, geographic location, private or public distinction, and level of degrees granted. Again, these data points were collected using the information on each institution's website. The dataset for this study is openly available (Randall, 2024).

School Selection

The colleges and universities included in this assessment were selected because of their institutional affiliation with one or more of the following organizations: the Association of Research Libraries (ARL); the Colorado Association of Research Libraries (CARL); the Canadian Association of Research Libraries (CARL/ABRC); Research I Institutions (RI); the Association of American Universities (AAU); and the National Collegiate Athletic Association Division I Football Bowl Subdivision (Division I-A).

These organizations were selected because the participating colleges and universities represent U.S. and Canadian institutions of higher learning with extensive research and degree programs; libraries with research and scholarship focus; and diverse student populations and geographic locations. Additionally, CARL was selected to assess regional institutions; to provide broader context for the authors' home institution; and to study a wider variety of institution types beyond research-intensive institutions, such as community colleges, small liberal arts schools, STEM-focused institutions, and regional universities.

Traditionally, conference-level analysis of peer and partner institutions is appropriate to ascertain trends among regional or interrelated colleges and universities. Moreover, many NCAA conferences have corresponding academic partnerships that result in established standards for cooperative collecting and research policies for the libraries at those institutions.

The NCAA conference of the authors' home institution was dissolved in 2023, and the former participants joined multiple other conferences. Moreover, as multiple Division I-A Conferences were fundamentally restructured in the 2023–2024 academic year, it became apparent that a more comprehensive assessment of Division I-A institutions would be necessary for this survey, which is why all Division I-A conferences were included.

It should be noted that Tribally Controlled College and Universities (TCCU) and Native American-Serving Non-Tribal Institutions (NASNTI) were not included in this round of analysis. These institutions, alongside other Minority Serving Institutions (MSI), will be discussed in a subsequent evaluation.

In short, the institutions included in this study represent a comprehensive selection of research-intensive U.S. and Canadian colleges and universities and their libraries. As a result, there are a total of 234 unique institutions included in this survey.

CIS Programs

Much like the various terminology used to describe the role of liaison librarians, academic institutions use a remarkable variety of terms to describe the multidisciplinary programs of study related to CIS, such as Native American, American Indian, Indigenous, First Nations, Aboriginal, Métis, as well as distinct nations, tribes, and communities. For the purposes of this study, we have elected to use the term Critical Indigenous Studies (CIS) to describe the college and university programs in this assessment. We recognize that a single term neither encapsulates all aspects of the programs in this discipline nor the diversity of these populations. However, the term Critical Indigenous Studies (CIS) effectively conveys the distinct nature of this multidisciplinary area of study.

Further, we define CIS programs as distinct areas of academic study that provide a combination of required and elective courses, as well as related extracurricular and programmatic activities, and that are organized for the achievement of specific learning outcomes related to the multidisciplinary understanding of Native American, American Indian, Indigenous, First Nations, Aboriginal, and Métis people, as well as distinct nations, tribes, and communities. Similar to area and cultural studies, as mentioned in the literature review, CIS programs are inherently interdisciplinary or multidisciplinary programs as they incorporate not only the study of these historic and contemporary cultural communities, but also their ways of knowing and knowledge systems, and the impact of colonization and legal discrimination into their programmatic learning outcomes.

These programs may culminate in a variety of ways including, but not limited to, undergraduate and graduate degrees, degree concentrations or areas of focus, minors, certificates, and honors. Moreover, several different disciplines, such as anthropology, history, and interdisciplinary/independent studies, offer degree concentrations in CIS and CIS-related topics. As these disciplines provide specific CIS learning outcomes and curricular opportunities (as indicated by their universities' websites), they were included in the survey as CIS programs. Given the relative naissance of CIS programs and this area of study, we included these disciplinary CIS programs because their learning outcomes and roles within their respective institutional settings appear to serve parallel academic functions, even if they may not offer the same communal support for Indigenous students. Those institutions with nonacademic programs that offered only CIS-focused extracurricular activities and support were not counted as CIS programs in this survey.

Liaison Librarians

While these librarians are identified by different terms and titles at their respective home institutions, for the purposes of this study, we are using the term *liaison librarian*. As mentioned in the literature review, responsibilities and services carried about by liaison librarians vary across institutions; however, they serve a distinct function within academic libraries.

For this assessment, "subject specialists," "liaison librarians," and librarians who were identified by their institutions' websites as providing a specific, disciplinary or subject-based expertise were counted as liaisons. For the purposes of this research, those liaisons who are indicated by their libraries' websites as providing subject matter expertise, research and collection development services, outreach and engagement, teaching and learning, and additional scholarly resources for Native American, American Indian, Indigenous, First Nations, Métis, and distinct nations, tribes, and communities were identified as CIS liaison librarians.

Moreover, many liaison librarians support multiple disciplines and subject areas; we have included those liaisons in this study, alongside their peers who only support one area, to ensure all CIS liaisons are counted. Positions that could conceivably include CIS (e.g., a generic area studies librarian) but that did not explicitly call out this work were not included in the count without additional evidence (e.g., a research guide) that the librarian provided these services.

Limitations

We recognize that the quality of support provided by liaisons and their degree of subject expertise in CIS may vary significantly, especially at libraries where liaisons have many assigned disciplines. With this in mind, we understand our results as evidence of libraries that have recognized a need to support CIS programs and students, and not as a qualitative indication of the presence of high-quality, focused, and expert liaison library services in this area. The study does not account for positions that may have been vacant or unfilled during the period under study—although this likely would have marginal effect on the results—because in many cases, an interim would be assigned to the subject area and posted to the library’s website, in which case they would be considered to have a liaison.

Conversely, if a position remained vacant without an interim for an extended time, we feel the classification of “no liaison” is appropriate. This study also misses liaisons who are not listed on the library’s website; however, as this kind of liaisonship is usually focused on more internal departmental communication to the library, rather than student support and subject expertise, we argue that this kind of service is not the focus of this study. Additionally, of the libraries studied, only a few do not offer services through some version of a liaison model (5.6%). The study is focused on major research institutions and therefore the predominance of liaison models is not generalizable to all colleges and universities due to the size and resources available to these institutions. The inclusion of CARL, however, provides an array of academic institutions beyond research-intensive institutions, including small liberal arts schools, community colleges, and STEM-focused institutions, and may therefore provide a sense of the situation in a wider variety of schools.

The data presented here represents a snapshot of the landscape of CIS liaison librarian services as of 2024. It does not reflect changes in government priorities and funding resulting from the 2025 U.S. federal transition. Importantly, it captures information that has subsequently been deleted or obscured by institutions due to U.S. executive orders and state laws targeting diversity and inclusion work.

Results

Figure 1 presents the current landscape of CIS programs and CIS library liaisons in the United States and Canada at major research institutions. Institutions are mapped at the location of their main campus. Circles are color coded by the presence of CIS programs and CIS liaisons, illustrating where CIS programs can be found, as well as which libraries support these programs with a liaison librarian. To present a full picture of schools with CIS programs, this map includes the 13 schools in the dataset whose libraries do not provide services via a liaison model, categorized as not offering a CIS liaison. In the subsequent analyses, these schools are omitted to provide a fairer assessment of library services for CIS programs. The overall numbers for institutions in this study can be found in Table 1.

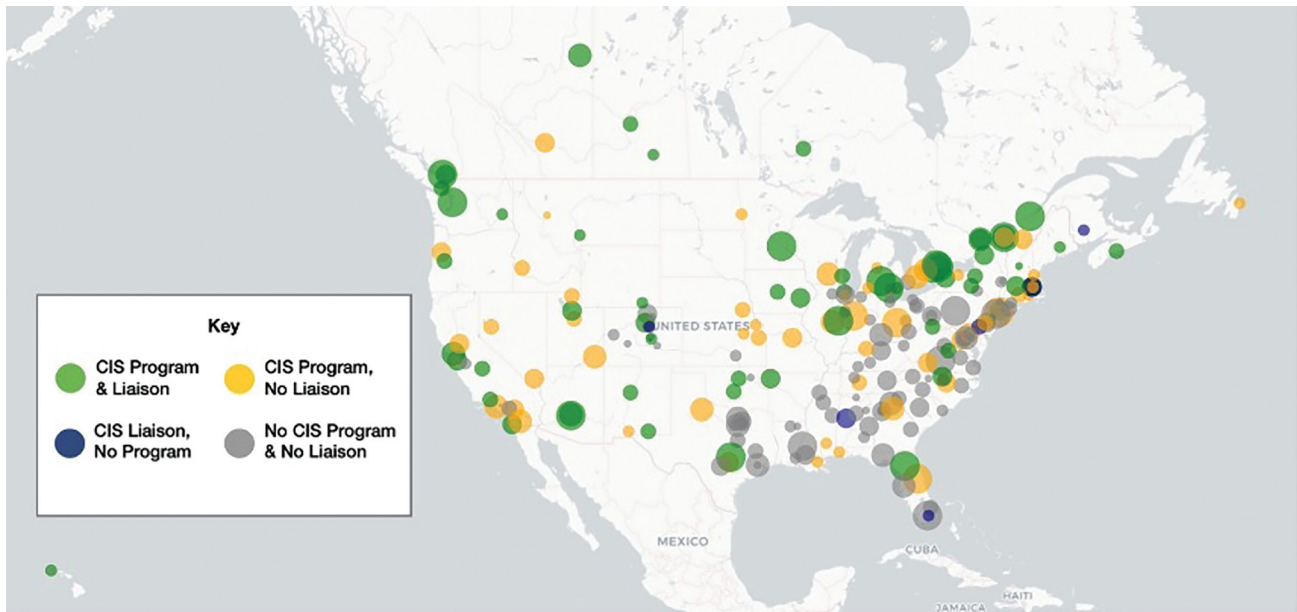


Figure 1. Library Support for Critical Indigenous Studies Program in the United States and Canada by Student Population

TABLE 1 Overall Institution Data			
Institutions by CIS and Liaison Program Status	Number of Institutions (Percentages by Subcategory)		
Institutions with CIS Programs	126 (54%)		
No Liaison Program	➡	5 (4%)	
Liaison Program	➡	121 (96%)	
CIS Liaison		➡	65 (52%)
No CIS Liaison		➡	56 (48%)
Institutions Without CIS Programs	108 (46%)		
No Liaison Program	➡	8 (7%)	
Liaison Program	➡	100 (93%)	
CIS Liaison		➡	8 (8%)
No CIS Liaison		➡	92 (92%)

As seen in Figure 2, the presence of a CIS program or degree varied between 49% and 69% in the U.S. organizations under study. The Canadian universities were a clear outlier, with nearly all studied universities having a CIS program. Almost all major university libraries had some kind of liaison or subject specialist program, with percentages consistently above 95%; the only exception was CARL, a Colorado specific organization with a mix of small and large institutions. CIS liaison librarians were concentrated in institutions with a CIS program but consistently lagged behind the number of overall CIS programs that exist. Once again, Canadian universities were significantly ahead of their U.S. counterparts. Interestingly, CARL

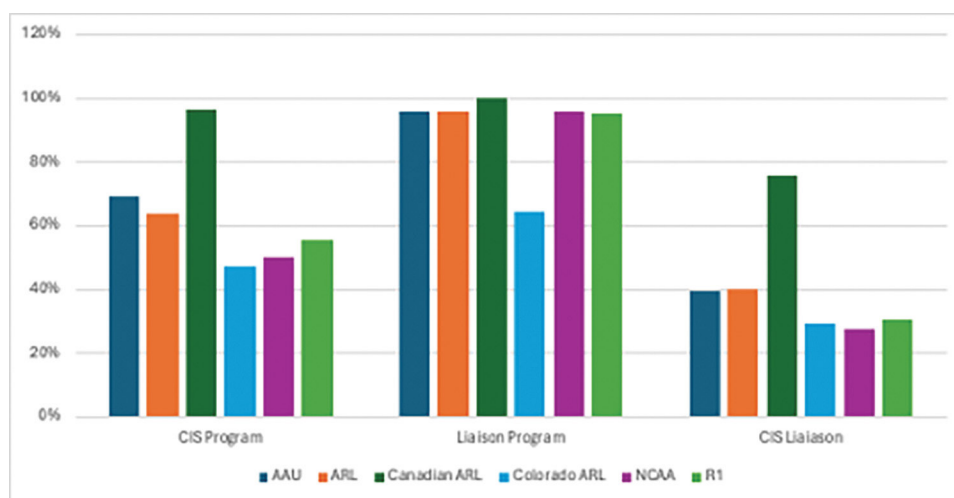


Figure 2. Presence of Critical Indigenous Studies Resources

libraries, despite having a much lower percentage of schools with liaison librarian programs, had a similar rate of CIS librarians compared to other organizations with much higher rates of liaison programs. This suggests that, while CARL libraries are less likely to have liaison programs, when these universities do have such programs, they are much more likely to include a CIS librarian.

Figure 3 illustrates the distribution of schools that either have no CIS program, have a CIS program but do not have a CIS liaison librarian, or have a CIS program and do have a CIS liaison librarian. It shows that, except for those institutions in the Canadian ARL, the percentage of schools with both a CIS program and a CIS librarian remain the minority, hovering between 26% and 39%. The NCAA, R1, and CARL specifically, lag behind regarding the presence of a CIS program. Colorado ARL libraries have a much smaller instance of CIS programs without corresponding library support.

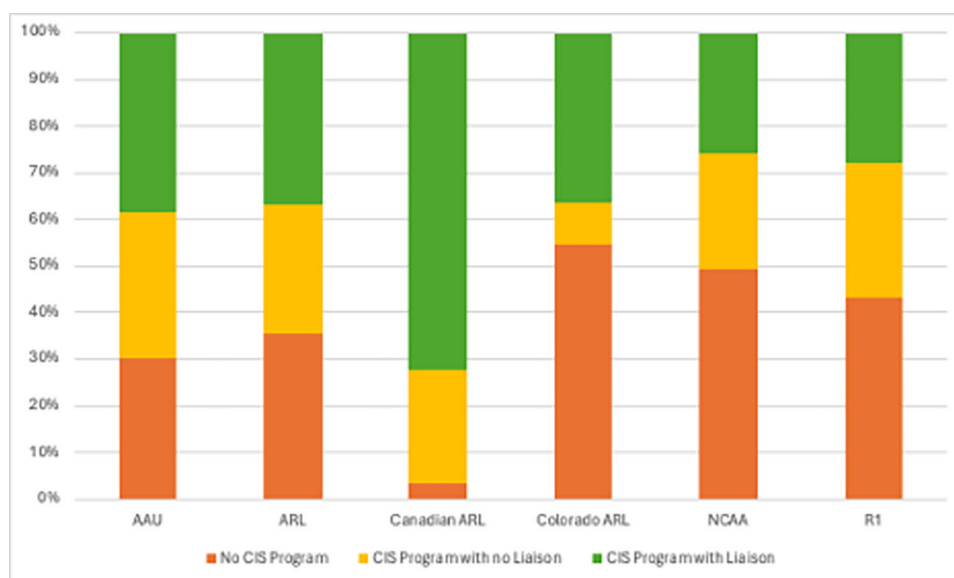


Figure 3. CIS Program and Liaisons by Institutional Affiliation

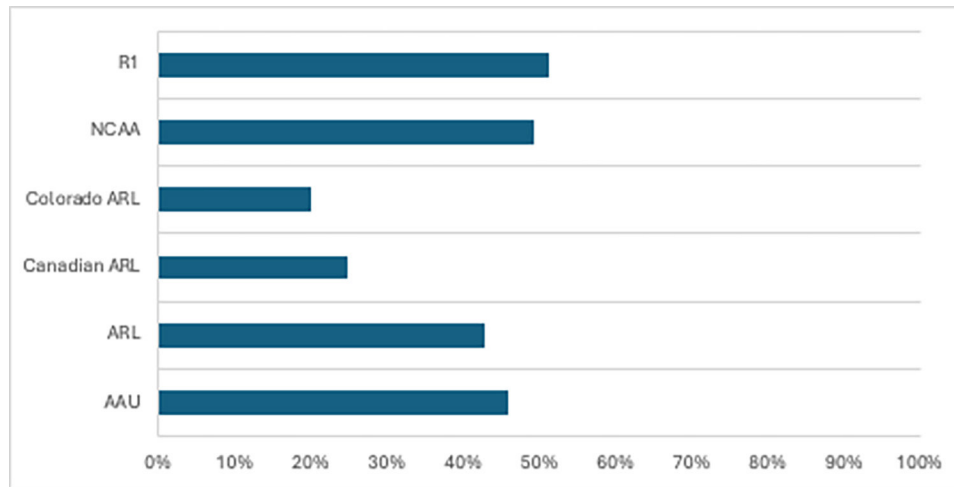


Figure 4. Percentage of Schools with a CIS Program That Do Not Have a CIS Liaison

As Figure 4 clearly shows, of the institutions whose libraries operate with a liaison model, roughly half of all CIS programs in the U.S. lack a liaison librarian who would provide specialized outreach, collection building, instruction, or research assistance. In the Canadian schools present, only 25% of CIS programs lack a liaison. Meanwhile up to 51% of Carnegie Research Intensive universities have a CIS program that has no publicly assigned liaison librarian. Of the 11 member institutions of Colorado ARL (CARL), six operate without a liaison model and were omitted from analysis. Of the remaining five, only 20% (one library) did not have a liaison supporting CIS programs publicly listed.

While this is admittedly a small selection of institutions, there is more variety in student enrollment size present in the CARL institutions, unlike the other groupings of institutions listed in this analysis. We believe this demographic variety directly correlates to the types of services offered by the corresponding libraries, specifically the choice to operate with or without liaison models. While student enrollment might affect decisions to operate in a liaison model, CARL institutions are still successful at offering liaison support for the CIS programs. Drawing definitive conclusions regarding any possible correlation between student enrollment, liaison models and CIS programs is the topic for a later investigation. Of the U.S. schools affiliated with groups that have more member institutions, ARL libraries have the fewest CIS programs that lack a liaison at 43%, perhaps reflecting the increased investment in libraries required to be an ARL member (although this percentage is still high).

Discussion

Does Size Matter?

As seen in the figures above, the sizes of the colleges and universities included in this landscape analysis range from very small to very large institutions. Although the selection of institutions included in this survey is not a comprehensive sample with generalizable conclusions, we were surprised to discover that institutional size does not appear to be as significant a determinant of CIS programs and liaisons as originally expected. This result could reflect institutional selection, given the fact that, of 234 colleges and universities included in this survey, 72% have a population of more than 15,000 students and are overwhelmingly focused on research and

scholarly output. More data from smaller institutions is necessary to conclude that size is not a significant factor in the presence of a CIS librarian.

Additionally, libraries that support academic institutions of all sizes have liaison librarianship programs, even as differences among liaison expectations and responsibilities vary from institution to institution. The frequency of liaison programs appears to illustrate the significance of this function, particularly in research-focused libraries, even as academic librarians across the profession debate the future of this kind of work.

These observations raise the question: How do smaller institutions and their libraries compare? Do colleges and universities with lower student enrollment have CIS programs, and do their respective libraries have liaison programs with CIS liaisons? Smaller institutions may not have the same level of resources and funding to put toward research and scholarly output as their larger peers; however, that is not necessarily an indicator of the presence of CIS programs or CIS library liaisons.

Geographic Trends

As mentioned previously, academic institutions of all sizes across the U.S. have CIS programs. These schools, however, are disproportionately located in the Western region of the country, in states such as Montana, Idaho, Wyoming, Utah, Colorado, New Mexico, Arizona, Nevada, Washington, Oregon, California, and Hawaii. We hypothesize that these institutions established and supported CIS programs due to the historic and contemporary presence of Indigenous populations in this geographic region.

The density of CIS programs in this region is particularly noticeable in comparison to institutions in other regions of the United States (e.g., the Midwest, South, and Northeast). While these Western institutions appear to be addressing their historic relationships with regional Indigenous communities, Indigenous people have called every region of North America, or Turtle Island, their home. Therefore, why have colleges and universities in the Midwest, South, and Northeast not followed suit and reconciled their colonial pasts with their Indigenous neighbors to the same extent as their Western peers? Has the legacy of forced displacement made the Indigenous peoples of these regions less visible and therefore easier to ignore?

Moreover, the Canadian institutions included in this survey stand in contrast to the colleges and universities of the United States, with 97% of Canadian institutions supporting CIS programs. As mentioned in the earlier sections of this article, Canadian institutions are legally bound by the Truth and Reconciliation legislation to recognize and address their complicity in settler colonialism, in part by supporting CIS programs. However, much like the previous discussion of size, most of these Canadian schools are large, public institutions with a focus on research and scholarly output.

The presence of CIS programs is not necessarily proof that colleges and universities are showing up for their Indigenous communities earnestly or are genuinely investing in their Indigenous neighbors. And, conversely, schools without CIS programs may be supporting Indigenous students and local tribal communities in other ways. As this is not a qualitative study, we cannot answer these questions. This is, however, an opportunity to assess how many major research institutions and their corresponding libraries are supporting the Indigenous communities local to them through the presence of CIS programs and library liaisons.

Implications for Libraries

Only 28% of the institutions of higher learning assessed in this survey have both CIS programs and CIS liaisons in their respective libraries. That only a minority of colleges and universities libraries, 73 in total, provide a CIS liaison librarian is disappointing. What makes this observation particularly unsatisfactory is that 54% of colleges and universities (126 institutions) have established CIS programs, but only 52% of these programs are supported with a liaison librarian (see Table 1). These institutions have seemingly recognized the significance of supporting the Indigenous people, tribes, and nations who intersect with their academic and campus communities. Moreover, libraries at institutions which have both CIS programs and CIS liaisons could incorporate foundational tenets of Indigenous librarianship into their institutional practices of librarianship through liaison work. By providing support and resources for Indigenous people and Indigenous Knowledge (IK), these libraries could provide culturally safe spaces, provide resources for tribal communities, and support Indigenous scholarship and the instruction of IK across disciplines.

The number of CIS programs at major universities without an assigned subject specialist librarian is highly concerning, especially considering the prevalence of liaison librarian programs. We speculate that one reason for a lack of CIS liaisons is that these units are often positioned more precariously and/or less officially within academic institutions; they are often formed as centers, programs, certificates, etc., rather than as a true department or major. This may lead to libraries underserving CIS due to reasons they may believe are neutral (e.g., they only provide liaisons to departments); however, in reality, this reflects the systemic oppression represented by the under-recognition and precarious positioning of marginalized knowledge in the academy. Instead of reinforcing this oppression, libraries should be attentive to historical imbalances in support and resources and should work to rectify long standing disparities regarding which disciplines and areas of study are supported by the library and which are not. The impact of libraries underserving CIS programs affects collection building, cataloging, research assistance, and outreach. All these areas have challenges and needs unique to CIS librarianship; yet without a specialist to both conduct this work and advocate for these needs, they are highly likely to go unmet.

CIS faculty are likely to need research materials that have been under-collected by libraries due to the domination of Whiteness in the libraries, academia, and publishing (Rybin Koob et al., 2022). Indeed, it takes dedicated work and attention to shift the library's collection to reflect the needs of CIS scholars. Without a liaison librarian, CIS faculty may see a library that doesn't collect in their research area and assume the library isn't and wouldn't support their research. They may be reluctant to approach the library to request that their needs be met due to a lack of institutional trust, dismissals of requests by other librarians, or simply because they assume the library has no interest in building such collections (Becks, 2023). Building trust and opening lines of communication between the library and CIS scholars is an essential part of the work of a CIS librarian. Because CIS scholars are less likely to get their research needs met than scholars of other disciplines without a specialist, the low number of CIS liaison librarians is especially concerning.

Students who study Indigenous topics are less likely to receive instruction that acknowledges the authority of Indigenous Knowledge, that recognizes Indigenous research methods, or that is sensitive to the oppression and exploitation of Indigenous people by researchers and research (Archibald et al., 2019; Lambert, 2014; Tuhiwai-Smith, 2023; Watkins, 2017; Watkins

& Randall, 2024). Library users may be more likely to find offensive and inaccurate cataloging describing Indigenous identities. Researchers will not be able to receive expert research assistance from a specialist librarian. Users may be reluctant to use the library, are likely to suffer from library anxiety, and/or may not receive the necessary outreach that welcomes them into the library and increases their chances for success. These are just a few examples of CIS librarians' work and of how CIS faculty and students are likely to be underserved by libraries that lack a specialist.

While this study focuses on the connection between CIS liaisons and CIS programs to highlight underserved library users, having a CIS program is not a prerequisite for having a CIS librarian. Indeed, the eight libraries in the sample who had a CIS liaison, but no CIS program are to be commended. While Critical Indigenous Studies is a specific academic discipline, Indigenous Knowledge (IK)—information and knowledge from traditional Indigenous ways of knowing—crosses all disciplines. IK forms an important part of knowledge in a wide range of disciplines including medicine, forestry, art, history, environmental science, and sustainability, among many others. Incorporating IK into library collections is an essential part of building an inclusive collection, one that is not exclusively dominated by a monocultural Western way of knowing. Bringing IK into a library collection, especially in a way that is respectful and nonexploitative, is difficult to do without a subject librarian with a background and understanding of Indigenous ways of knowing. Most universities have an Indigenous faculty and student population who, regardless of discipline, should see their traditional knowledge systems valued and respected by the library.

This landscape analysis demonstrates how large, research-oriented colleges and universities are seemingly moving in a direction that values a diversity of perspectives and knowledge vis-à-vis the presence and support of CIS programs. Moreover, it shows how academic libraries have not kept pace with this movement, as evidenced by the disproportionately low number of CIS liaisons across colleges and universities. Academic libraries play a critical role within their campus communities. They have a responsibility to provide appropriate and equitable resources and services to all their patrons, but most especially to those patrons who have been historically underserved by libraries in the past and whose needs are different from those of settler students and faculty.

Conclusion

Institutions across higher education have been forced to recognize their complicity in historic and ongoing policies that reaffirm White supremacy through discriminatory practices, particularly in the last several years. Many colleges and universities have used this opportunity to establish cultural centers, faculty lines, and other funding packages for areas like Indigenous Studies, Asian, Asian American and Pacific Islander Studies, and Black, African American and Africana Studies. Academic libraries should follow suit by providing these programs with liaison librarians, collection development policies, and programming for these and similar cultural areas of study, especially in light of recent White-supremacist attacks on DEI curricula and initiatives.

Academic libraries have the opportunity to take initiatives centered on diversity, equity, and inclusion to the next level by incorporating principles of decolonization and intersectionality. By increasing their connections with CIS programs within their respective institutions, libraries can collaborate with faculty, staff, and students to ensure that they are reflected in

the libraries' resources, collections, and services. These relationships will take time, however, as institutional legacies of colonization, objectification, and racism are not quickly or easily overcome. But if librarians can build on their existing work to move toward a shared goal of equitable access and toward addressing historic failures within libraries, then perhaps CIS programs and Indigenous members of campus will no longer be as underserved as they have been by academic libraries.

What would it take to see more CIS liaisons in North American college and university libraries? Based on the number of CIS programs and CIS liaisons in their libraries, Canadian schools appear to heed the initiatives laid out by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission to educate their students about the history of colonization. Is this kind of legislation the only way for the United States to catch up to their Canadian peers? Libraries are working with limited resources and must make difficult decisions about where to place their personnel resources. We argue that, even without legislation, correcting historical imbalances and providing equitable resources to underserved communities must be a priority for libraries, which means prioritizing positions such as CIS librarians.

Significant questions remain around the state of CIS librarianship. How do smaller institutions compare to the larger ones present in this study? How might library resources differ between Minority Serving Institutions (MSI) and Predominantly White Institutions (PWI)? How have executive orders and state laws targeting diversity and inclusion affected support for CIS in libraries? These questions are the target of our ongoing research, and we hope to address them in future publications. These questions are also key to understanding larger trends in academic libraries' support for Critical Indigenous Studies as a discipline, as well as the Indigenous students, staff, and faculty who navigate higher education and its legacy of colonization.

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