

Praise for *Narrative Expansions*

‘Assembled with intentionality, openness and care, the essays in *Narrative Expansions* present a wide range of perspectives on decolonial library practice and theory. Jess Crilly and Regina Everitt begin with a conversation about how this book came into being, and then offer an important overview of the tensions and significance of what it means to decolonize academic libraries. The authors share their knowledge and experiences in ways that open possibilities for thinking and acting critically and expansively across a range of areas in the field, as well as the colonial epistemological foundations on which librarianship has been built. This is a necessary and engaging volume.’

Melissa Adler, Assistant Professor, Faculty of Information & Media Studies, Western University

‘*Narrative Expansions* is the book that any library and information specialist interested in ‘decolonising the university/curricula/library’ should read. It contextualises the societal, institutional, library and information landscapes, bringing together the different threads and debates around this topic and humanises it with nuanced conversations and presentation of practical examples of enacted change. Decolonisation is a journey in reflection, asking hard questions, having difficult conversations, and action. This book is a first essential step on this urgent journey and expansion of narratives.’

Elizabeth E. Charles, Assistant Director (Digital Services, Systems and Collections), Library Services, Birkbeck, University of London

‘This is a rich, harrowing and, above all, generous book that provides a welcome (and long overdue) focal point for decolonial work in libraries. Building upon recent grass-root conference initiatives, the book is not afraid to tackle hard-hitting topics, including the ongoing trauma of libraries’ colonial legacies and the dangers of performative allyship, amongst other themes. At the same time, this is a hopeful book, as authors draw from personal narratives and critical theoretical frameworks to outline a powerful vision of what decolonised and anti-racist library work is – and what it could be, when we dare to question the voices, knowledges and pedagogies of our profession.’

Dr Alison Hicks, Assistant Professor and Programme Director for Library and Information Studies, University College London

Narrative Expansions

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information professionals.

Narrative Expansions

**Interpreting Decolonisation
in Academic Libraries**

**Edited by
Jess Crilly and Regina Everitt**



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The chapters: the contributors 2022

Published by Facet Publishing

7 Ridgmount Street, London WC1E 7AE

www.facetpublishing.co.uk

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British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library.

ISBN 978-1-78330-497-4 (paperback)

ISBN 978-1-78330-498-1 (hardback)

ISBN 978-1-78330-499-8 (PDF)

ISBN 978-1-78330-521-6 (EPUB)

First published 2022

Text printed on FSC accredited material



Typeset from authors' files in 10/13pt Elegant Garamond and Humanist 521 by Flagholme Publishing Services.

Printed and made in Great Britain by CPI Group (UK) Ltd, Croydon, CR0 4YY.

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Preface

The origins of Narrative Expansions

Jess Crilly (JC): *Narrative Expansions* originated with an invitation from Facet Publishing to write something about decolonising libraries and, reflecting on my positionality, I decided not to write something myself but to co-edit a volume, and with someone whom I knew would bring different experiences and perspectives to the work. I had been working with collections and discovery (at University of the Arts London before retiring in September 2020) and concerned for a while to really understand what was meant by decolonisation, and how this was, could or should be interpreted in libraries, so that anything we did was theoretically grounded and we were not jumping on a bandwagon or using a buzzword (Crilly, 2019).

Regina Everitt (RE): When Jess asked me to be part of this project, I accepted without hesitation, though I had reservations about the term ‘decolonisation’. As an African American with 400 years of history in the United States – admittedly many of them violent and painful – the term ‘decolonisation’ did not immediately resonate with me. The issue for me was simply racism to reinforce the notion of White superiority. I grew up learning that *if you are White you are alright, if you are Brown stick around, and if you are Black step back*. So, I wanted the movement to be called what it is and not be dressed up in what I felt was a term to attract popular support – a fad! However, working on this project and learning more about the experiences of those who grew up in Africa and the Caribbean before and after their independence from Europe, ‘decolonisation of the mind’ certainly resonated. I had read parts of Fanon’s *Black Skin, White Masks* during my early undergraduate studies, but did not fully appreciate its impact, as my world was confined to the New York–South Carolina corridor in the north-east of the United States. Although I grew up in a predominantly Black community, colourism and the aspiration towards the media’s interpretation of ‘Whiteness’ (e.g. skin tone, speech, possessions) were pervasive.

Voice

RE: Like the range of authors in this book, Jess and I have differing approaches to writing, which has been a strength for this project. Jess takes a more theoretical approach, which will resonate with those who best consume information from ‘academic-style’ writing. I take an experiential approach, which on this project foregrounds my ‘lived’ experience as the ‘product’ of education through a Eurocentric prism that essentially excluded me. We have intentionally sought to capture both voices so as to challenge accepted epistemology,

so there are some individual pieces of writing from us in this Introduction and the Afterword, as well as the two of us writing together.

JC: We really value the different kinds of writing in this book, some of it very grounded in personal experience and reflection, some of it more traditionally academic, and the author's positionality has often determined the approach.

Challenges of writing the book

RE: A key challenge was the uncomfortable and unpopular task of categorising people who do not identify as White. Black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME), used widely in the UK, has been dismissed as a lazy attempt at 'othering' swathes of people. The Asian categorisation does little to differentiate between people from the Indian subcontinent and East Asia. Traveller communities may identify as minority ethnic, though they may be categorised as White for some statistics. Although 'minority' in the UK context denotes that it is a predominantly White nation, the term also suggests 'political' and 'social' minority – thus marginalising or minoritising those who do not identify as White. The term 'people of color' (POC) or 'Black, Indigenous and people of color' (BIPOC) is used in America, but for me these terms hark back to the days of when Black people were referred to as 'coloured people' – which is now considered derogatory. There is no consensus on the correct term. I find myself shifting between 'Black, Asian and Global Majority', 'Black, Asian and marginalised or minoritised ethnic', again abbreviated as BAME, and 'Black and Brown people', depending on the context. We have left it to the discretion of the authors to determine the appropriate terminology for the context of their chapters.

JC: I have thought too about the appropriateness of the book format for a dynamic topic, but after a series of conferences and writing in the UK in the last few years it seemed a good idea to pull some of it together, as well as integrating what libraries are doing with the bigger picture, especially in the wider discourse of decolonising the university, and from other perspectives than that of the UK. That's why the book has contributions from the student perspective, library and academic literacy workers, anthropologists, researchers, curators and academics, as well as being international in scope. And again, though centred on the academic library, we have taken a broad interpretation of this term and have an important contribution from the British Library – an essential component of the UK library infrastructure – while the chapter by Mutonga and Okune is really cross-sectoral and features a public library case study.

The book presents a snapshot of thought and activity at a particular moment in time. Many of the authors refer to Decolonisation Groups that they are a part of – that work is dynamic and in many ways still emerging, and so will have progressed during the writing of this book.

Our hope for the future

RE: I have had the privilege of speaking with students who are starting careers in the library and information profession about our role in supporting our institutions towards anti-racism and equality, diversity and inclusion. I will now be referring them to this book alongside *Knowledge Justice: Disrupting Library and Information Studies through Critical Race Theory* as essential reading to encourage them to approach their profession through the lens of critical librarianship, questioning the voices, imagery and spaces that tell a single story. As future leaders of these institutions, these students have the power to expand the narratives currently dominating their collections and spaces.

JC: A book like this can only be highly selective and partial, and there are so many other aspects of decolonising work that could be discussed. I hope that this momentum for change continues.

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Introduction: Decolonise or ‘Decolonise’?

Jess Crilly and Regina Everitt

Decolonisation is impossible, but we must make her possible.

(Foluke Adebisi)

A contested term

When we were editing this book, and thinking about the title, we discussed at various points whether to use decolonise or ‘decolonise’, and it’s noticeable that the contributing authors to this volume sometimes also use ‘decolonise’. So, what is the tension around this term?

Decolonisation as an intention has clarity. The students at the University of Cape Town in 2015 were intent on decolonising: ‘For the first time since the anti-apartheid movement, South African students were grabbing international headlines, as they struggled for universal access to an education that did not reproduce the imperial logic their parents’ generation fought to dismantle’ (Elliott-Cooper, 2018, 290).

The intentions of students and other activists in the UK are also clear, though in the different context of its being a historic European centre of colonialism, as expressed in Keele University’s Manifesto for Decolonising the Curriculum:

Decolonization involves identifying colonial systems, structures and relationships, and working to challenge those systems. It is not ‘integration’ or simply the token inclusion of the intellectual achievements of non-white cultures. Rather, it involves a paradigm shift from a culture of exclusion and denial to the making of space for other political philosophies and knowledge systems. It’s a culture shift to think more widely about why common knowledge is what it is, and in so doing adjusting cultural perceptions and power relations in real and significant ways.

(Keele University, 2018)

So are the tensions around the call to ‘decolonise the library/curriculum/university’ more about enactment than purpose? In relation to the library, perhaps it is the implication that decolonisation is a definable, finite and measurable process that is problematic; like so many processes that constitute the organisation of libraries, the implication that we can start and one day finish this project. The library is a place that privileges practicality (Hudson, 2017; Nicholson and Seale, 2018), and though there is work to be done, this is not the familiar project process with measurable time scales and impacts that we are so used to implementing, and is about learning and unlearning as well as about activity. Or

is it around the accuracy and legitimacy of the term ‘decolonisation’ as it relates to the work being done under that banner, which should logically be radical and transformative? Or the need to properly contextualise decolonisation, surely one thing in the historic centres of colonialism, another in the settler nation and postcolonial/neocolonial city.

There is a quandary at the heart of the call to decolonise – if the neoliberal university (or national library, or public library) is part of the problem, and systemically racist, is decolonisation a philosophical possibility? And, by association, can libraries decolonise within those structures and constraints, or is coloniality so embedded as to be immutable? Who has the insight, and the wisdom to do this? To quote Audre Lorde, ‘The master’s tools will never dismantle the master’s house. They may allow us temporarily to beat him at his own game but they will never enable us to bring about genuine change’ (Lorde, 1984); or, as Adebisi asks, ‘How illogical is it that the structure we are attempting to decolonise is the structure we are attempting to use to decolonise?’ (Adebisi, 2019).

Despite the rapid uptake of a decolonisation discourse in universities and other institutions, the critiques of this movement are sobering. The influential article by Tuck and Yang (2012) is perhaps one of the more cited references in this book. Tuck and Yang describe decolonising work as a move to settler innocence, and warn of using the term as a metaphor instead of enacting the radical acts that decolonisation should logically entail, including the return of Indigenous land.

There is a long and bumbled history of non-Indigenous peoples making moves to alleviate the impacts of colonization. The too-easy adoption of decolonizing discourse (making decolonization a metaphor) is just one part of that history and it taps into pre-existing tropes that get in the way of more meaningful potential alliances. We think of the enactment of these tropes as a series of moves to innocence (Malwhinney, 1998), which problematically attempt to reconcile settler guilt and complicity, and rescue settler futurity.

(Tuck and Yang, 2012, 3)

Tuck and Yang are referring to a settler-colonial context, yet colonisation and therefore decolonisation are contextual. As Bhambra states in *Decolonising the University*:

We think there is value in complicating the substantive claim made by Tuck and Yang (that decolonisation is exclusively about the repatriation of land to indigenous people) in order to extend and deepen their political warning ... colonisation (and hence decolonising) cannot be reduced to a historically specific and geographically particular articulation of the colonial project, namely settler-colonialism in the Americas.

(Bhambra, Gabriel and Nişancıoğlu, 2018, 4)

Regardless of context, the essence of the warning remains, that decolonisation should not be used as a metaphor to stand in for various kinds of social justice.

Other voices critiquing the decolonisation movement (in UK higher education) include Doharty and others (2020), who highlight the ways that staff of colour can be disproportionately burdened with the work, and note that ‘the misuse and overuse of the decolonize discourse place the term at (if not beyond) the risk of becoming little more than a superficial buzzword, severed from its radical essence’ (Doharty, Madriaga and Joseph-Salisbury, 2020, 3).

Appleton (2019) warns of overclaiming by using the term decolonisation: ‘Within the academy, I have seen the sloppy attempt to “decolonize” a syllabus or a programme without any real structural changes.’ Appleton proposes a more specific and grounded use of vocabulary, for example, ‘Diversify your syllabus and curriculum, Digress from the canon, Decentre knowledge and knowledge production . . .’ (Appleton, 2019).

There is also the risk that actions such as diversifying collections and reviewing reading lists can be co-opted into programmes of tokenistic change, to defer the need for more fundamental change.

Decolonising the library

And yet, though these are powerful and important warnings and critiques of how decolonisation is playing out in universities, there *is* clearly decolonising work being done in libraries, and this could be defined as activity that specifically addresses the multiple impacts on the library and knowledge production that result from imperial histories and colonialism. These long-lasting impacts of the colonial persist in ‘coloniality’, described by Maldonado-Torres: ‘Thus coloniality survives colonialism. It is maintained alive in books, in the criteria for academic performance, in cultural patterns, in common sense, in the self-image of peoples, in aspirations of self, and in so many other aspects of our modern experience. In a way, as modern subjects we breathe coloniality all the time and everyday’ (Maldonado-Torres, 2007, 243).

The construction of race as a hierarchical system with Whiteness as the pinnacle is a foundational logic of imperialism that justified some people being treated as less than human. ‘The Enlightenment was pivotal in the shift into the new age of empire: it provided the universalist, supposedly rational and scientific framework of knowledge that maintained colonial logic. Understanding how the Enlightenment and racism cannot be separated is the first step in truly appreciating that colonial logic still rules the world today’ (Andrews, 2021, 2).

Coloniality is evident everywhere in academia, in the persistent Whiteness of institutions, including libraries; in the legacy of Eurocentric collections; in the colonial roots of the academic subjects that form collections in libraries; in the dominance of English language and of academic publishing centred in Europe and the USA; and in many other aspects of scholarly communication. It is evident in the undervaluing and absence of Indigenous forms of knowledge, in accepted notions of research methodologies and forms of knowledge. Coloniality is also evident in the persistence of universalist knowledge

systems, classification schemes and cataloguing vocabularies, and these legacies are one of the most pressing challenges for libraries, as in the much-cited case of the Library of Congress Subject Heading ‘illegal aliens’ (Dartmouth College, 2019; Fox, 2020).

These are the territories where libraries are working to decolonise – through practical interventions, collaboration with academic staff and students, influence with publishers and suppliers and through developing criticality for their own understanding and for engagement with their library users.

The effects of the colonial are still with us, and attempts to disrupt and unsettle them can be described as decolonial – or anti-colonial. Sometimes these impacts of the colonial are absorbed into everyday practices to the point of invisibility, but sometimes there are material reminders, such as the missionary archives held by the SOAS Library, the busts of Sir Joseph Banks and Sir Hans Sloane at the entrance to the British Library and the lion’s head in the McMillan Library, Nairobi.

We cannot consider colonisation, ‘the darker side of Western modernity’ (Mignolo, 2011), in isolation, as it co-exists with patriarchy and capitalism. This is reflected in the way that the authors in this volume have used theoretical frames that are tangential or intersect with decolonisation, particularly critical librarianship, which, as defined by Nicholson and Seale (2018, 2) ‘uses a reflexive lens to expose and challenge the ways that libraries and the profession “consciously and unconsciously support systems of oppression”, thereby pursuing a socially just, theoretically informed praxis’. Other authors refer to knowledge democracy, critical pedagogy and critical information literacy, progressive librarianship, liberation theory and responses to structural oppressions, particularly anti-racism, and it should be said that libraries have been working in these spaces for decades.

Several authors have referenced critical race theory (CRT), which provides both a theoretical framework and a tool for activism; Leung and Lopez-McKnight (2021) have traced its application within library and information science (LIS) and the many ways that CRT can be used to challenge the foundational principles of the profession.

Contested narratives

Narrative Expansions was written during an extraordinary period of time, over 2020–21, when decolonisation was foregrounded in a struggle over the ownership of national narratives. Following the killing by police of George Floyd on 25 May 2020 in Minneapolis, the subsequent resurgence of Black Lives Matter and widespread protest against police brutality, many institutions in the cultural sector, including universities, responded with statements on anti-racism, frequently referencing the role of the library and its collections, redoubling their commitments to anti-racism and decolonisation. These were sometimes criticised for not reflecting what was actually happening in those institutions. Some iconic British institutions, including Kew Gardens and The National Trust, made public statements reflecting on their organisation’s relationship with slavery and imperialism.

The Brutish Museums (Hicks, 2020) was published, with its denunciation of the possession of the looted Benin Bronzes held in many UK and other nations' museums, describing museums such as Pitt Rivers in Oxford as sites of trauma and ongoing violence, and escalating the call for the restitution of looted objects – a call that is slowly being taken up. Some institutions are responding; Aberdeen University Museums and Special Collections have announced that they are returning a Benin Bronze (University of Aberdeen, 2021). The year 2020 was also the year of the toppling of the statue of Bristol slave trader Edward Colston, and a reappraisal and complicating of the role and biography of some revered national figures, particularly Winston Churchill. In summary, this was a time when the national narrative – whom it includes and excludes, whom it celebrates and ignores and how it is taught – was forefronted, and highly contested in what are characterised as culture wars. An example is the recent and controversial report of the UK Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities that mischaracterises the decolonisation of reading lists as 'banning White authors' (Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities, 2021, 8).

Conclusion

Though we are critically examining the concept of decolonising the library, and exploring the ways it is being interpreted in different contexts, it is a vital approach to thinking and acting on the colonial legacies that impact libraries and knowledge production. Lessons can be learned from the experiences and ideas of the authors who have contributed to this volume and the theoretical perspectives they bring: if we cannot fully enact the 'de-' of decolonisation, we can continue to work on decolonial or anti-colonial acts.

A key question for libraries is how to reconcile working in this space where decolonisation is impossible but necessary; in the words of Adebisi, 'Decolonisation is impossible, but we must make her possible' (Adebisi, 2019). Perhaps we can use the concept of radical hope, as the Pitt Rivers Museum has done, in order to reimagine museum practice and move forwards against a weight of history and custom. The work of decolonising the library is about understanding how the past has informed the present, but must also be about envisaging a better future, even if how to achieve it isn't always clear.

Radical Hope is directed toward a future goodness and it anticipates a good for which those who have the hope but as yet lack the appropriate concepts with which to understand it.

(Jonathan Lear, cited in Pitt Rivers Museum, n.d.)

About the book

The aim of *Narrative Expansions* is to draw together some of the work that has been taking place in libraries as part of the decolonising movement that has swept through higher education in the UK and elsewhere and to ask how decolonisation is being interpreted – and enacted – in academic libraries. *Narrative Expansions* is in two parts: Part 1 describes

the contexts that libraries are operating in and the impacts of those contexts through an experiential lens. Part 2 focuses on located practices where the theory and practice of decolonisation intersect and practitioners seek to understand how they can be interpreted and applied. Inevitably these are loose and overlapping categories.

Part I: Contexts and Experiences

Students have long been instigators for change in higher education, as well as collaborators with libraries. In Chapter 1, Hillary Gyebi-Ababio provides a student's perspective on decolonising the library, outlining key movements in decolonisation of higher education, such as Rhodes Must Fall from its origins in South Africa to campaigns at Oxford University, and Why Is My Curriculum White, calling readers to action by 'grasping the root', in the words of Angela Davis. Gyebi-Ababio explains how the contents of the library are potentially transformative for student identity and belonging, and how students are organising for change through National Union of Students- (NUS) led campaigns. The creation of the NUS Free Black University, and its founding principles of being multiformat and freely accessible to all, is definitely something for libraries to take note of.

The ownership and control of spaces, names and objects has become one of the most high-profile and contested areas of the decolonisation movement, in both public and institutional spaces – centring on statues, paintings and other artefacts and the names of buildings. In Chapter 2, Regina Everitt describes her formative experiences of public and educational spaces and their messages around cultural value and entitlement while growing up in Philadelphia. She explains how this feeling that you belong or don't belong in a space has informed her approach as a leader and manager of spaces in academia, and within the library.

The under-representation of and negative experience of Black, Asian and minoritised ethnic staff in libraries, and in the academy generally, is a recurring theme of the book. Mohammed Ishaq and Asifa Hussain (Chapter 4) draw on their research on the lived experience of these staff members in UK academic libraries, drawing parallels between the findings of a SCONUL-commissioned survey and experience in other areas of the public sector, and recommend actions for change. They conclude that without challenging the organisational culture, structures and processes that perpetuate and sustain racial inequality, decolonisation of the library is unattainable. Lorraine Jones and Marcia Wilson (Chapter 5) are part of an inexcusably paltry number of Black female educators in higher education in the UK. They explore the call to decolonise the library through a personal history of racialisation, learning and working in White institutions. Jones and Wilson use CRT to discuss the prevalence and meaning of Whiteness in the academy and explain the role of white allyship in challenging the misconception of the post-racial society. The library, the authors argue, has a powerful role at the centre of the institution, and must either step up to support decolonisation, or continue to prop up the status quo.

The time of writing the book was dominated by what can be described as Trumpism – a rise in populism in the USA and internationally, characterised by a deliberate attack on the concept of truth, the adoption of conspiracy theories such as QAnon, culminating in the storming of the US Capitol Building on 6 January 2021, and attacks on CRT as a legitimate methodology – alongside a pandemic. In Chapter 6 Angela Pashia reflects on these events and her experience of teaching critical information literacy in this climate, which led her to question the teaching of authoritative sources and alternative media. Pashia provides an important discussion of how the concepts of information literacy can adapt to a more extreme cultural climate of conspiracy and *disinformation*. She also explains why, in the US context, though politically aligned with the decolonisation movement, critical information literacy, social justice and structural oppression are foregrounded.

Sara Ewing (Chapter 3) provides a theoretical framework for decolonising research methodologies drawing on the influential work of Linda Tuhiwai Smith and others. Decolonising research methodologies aims to disrupt the colonial epistemology of universal knowledge, representation and legitimacy characterised by the exclusion of different modes of thinking and ways of living. Ewing discusses the power dynamics at play in the classroom, and how a decolonial epistemic shift works to liberate racial, sexual, gender, class, linguistic, religious and epistemic embodied experiences from oppression. She describes work with undergraduate Law students using texts outside the traditional canon to deconstruct moral, ethical and epistemological positions that underpin the study of law.

Part 2: In Practice

Several authors refer in their chapters to a current lack of critical content in UK LIS curricula. In Chapter 7 Briony Birdi considers the contribution of LIS education to the decolonisation movement, noting that calls to decolonise the university have led to reflections about the role of library collections, for example, but have had little, if any, impact on the LIS curriculum. Birdi proposes that decolonisation be embedded in both the theoretical and practice-led elements of the LIS programme. Drawing on her research and teaching, she provides a primer on how to make decolonisation core to the LIS curriculum.

Decolonisation is contextual and relates to specific histories and geographies. Rachel Chong and Ashley Edwards (Chapter 8) write within a settler-colonial context, from their personal experience and roles in Canadian university libraries. They explain the significance of the 2015 Truth and Reconciliation Commission and related legislation, and how universities and their constituent libraries are working to address the recommendations of the Commission. They consider what reconciliation means within this context and how the work of the Commission seeks to acknowledge and redress past wrongs. Syokau Mutonga and Angela Okune (Chapter 13) introduce the concept of

progressive librarianship, writing about their work with libraries in Nairobi, Kenya, using the McMillan Library and the work of the Book Bunk Trust as a case study. They pose the question, in the context of decolonisation: what do we remember and what do we forget? And how do we not simply ‘forget and move on’ but reclaim a radical past? Describing the impact of neo-colonialism (in the form of Structural Adjustment Programs) on the Kenyan infrastructure, Okune and Syokau question the risks and long-term impacts of multinational technology corporations mining, controlling and monetising cultural digital assets.

In Chapter 9, Marilyn Clarke describes why the decolonisation movement is important to academic libraries and how it has informed the Liberate Our Library work at Goldsmiths, University of London, working in collaboration with student campaigns. Clarke outlines the production of Eurocentric epistemologies during colonialism and the epistemicide of non-Western knowledge systems and ways of knowing and being. She argues for moves to a ‘knowledge democracy’ and the need for an activist stance from library workers.

Alexandra Duncan, Vivienne Eades-Miller and Adam Ramejki (Chapter 10) draw on critical pedagogy and describe student workshops developed at University of the Arts London, ‘Critical Library Research’, ‘Hack Your Library’ and workshops centred on Wikipedia, where learning spaces are framed as places of active critical enquiry and co-production. The workshops centre on critical thinking around library systems of knowledge, and democratisation of information production through empowerment of the student voice.

The British Library has a unique role as the UK’s national library, as a library of deposit, serving multiple audiences as an academic and research library, as partner to public libraries and as a cultural institution. As the steward of the nation’s knowledge, the British Library is part of every ‘decolonisation’ conversation, whether it concerns museums and galleries, archives and libraries or education and curricula. The British Library BAME Staff Network Decolonisation Working Group is a staff group committed to understanding how colonial history and structures manifest as racial discrimination in the workplace, and vows to revalue the experiences of minoritised people. In Chapter 11 they describe some recent activities of the Working Group across various areas of the Library – public spaces and exhibitions, the custodianship of physical and digital collections, cataloguing and metadata and discuss the particular challenges of working at scale.

In Chapter 12, Christopher Greenberg, Eve Lacey, Frances Marsh, Clara Panozzo Zéner and Jenni Skinner describe work taking place in Cambridge University Libraries through the Decolonising Through Critical Librarianship Group. Their case studies focus on the African Studies Library and Scott Polar Research Institute, as well as a discussion of how the Library can curate and make discoverable *cartonera* materials (a means of democratising publishing originating in Argentina). They describe how collections and legacy metadata have been critically evaluated and accessibility enhanced through a decolonising lens. In Chapter 14 Ludi Price outlines the history of SOAS

University of London from its roots in providing language instruction for colonial administrators, missionaries and scholars for roles within the British Empire to its present role and reputation as a radical space. Price explains the establishment of the Library Decolonisation Group in this context. The history of the Library means that its special collections, such as missionary archives, have unique research potential for understanding the complexities of the colonial past. Historical donations, some undocumented, raise the question of the provenance of materials, and ideas of repatriation and restitution. With the closure of physical spaces due to the pandemic and reliance on digitised materials, Price asks what stories and voices are lost from collections available in physical form only.

Much of the current work on decolonisation taking place in libraries is centred on collections, on what is selected, acquired and retained, the metadata that describes it and the algorithms within discovery layers. Kevin Wilson (Chapter 15) provides an overview of some contemporary issues in collection management, including the usefulness of collection development policies and how libraries can collaborate with academic staff in the production of reading lists. He uses a case study from the London School of Economics (LSE) to advocate for data-driven collection management. Using analytics from the library management system and reading list software, he describes their rich insights into the composition of collections, bringing into stark relief the bias towards authors of the Global North. Wilson argues that the bias in collections is exacerbated by ‘big deals’ from publishers that favour publications from the USA and UK, edging out titles from more diverse and small and/or specialist publishers.

Connections and common themes emerge across all the chapters. One example is the experiences of Wilson at LSE, of the Decolonising Through Critical Librarianship Group at Cambridge and of Price at SOAS University of London and how they are addressing colonial legacies in collections and their metadata that reveal the relationship between colonialism and the foundation and focus of academic disciplines such as geography, biology, anthropology, development studies and area studies. Academic library collections form part of an infrastructure that formalised and validated these disciplinary evolutions alongside institutional museums, the establishment of institutions and societies and the infrastructure of journals, academic departments and professorships. Academic libraries are now managing the legacies of Eurocentric collections and outdated metadata, while also advocating these collections as valuable sources for research.

Acknowledgement and thanks

We would like to thank the authors of this book for managing to write during a pandemic while they were grappling with working from home, childcare, anxiety and, for some, sickness and grief. Thank you all for staying the course.

Jess Crilly and Regina Everitt
May 2021

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