Rose A. Buchanan. "It was Definitely not in a Folder Labeled 'Indian'": Information-seeking Behaviors of Archival Users Interested in Native American Collections. A Master's Paper for the M.S. in L.S. degree. April, 2017. 84 pages. Advisor: Denise Anthony.

Few studies have focused on the information-seeking behaviors of archival users interested in particular cultural communities. But as community and social history are growing areas of research, it is important that archivists investigate how users identify and access relevant materials within their holdings. Of particular consideration are researchers interested in Native American communities. Collections related to Native Americans are not only dispersed across multiple indigenous and non-indigenous archives, but frequently described in ways that reflect inaccurate and outdated colonial ideologies. In this exploratory study, six archival users interested in Native American collections were interviewed about their information-seeking behaviors and research challenges. Findings from these interviews suggest several strategies for making Native-related collections more discoverable and accessible in culturally appropriate ways. Each of these strategies depends on creating and sustaining cooperative, collaborative, and mutually beneficial partnerships with Native communities.

Headings:

Archives users

Information-seeking behavior

Cataloging of Native American archives

Archives – Community partnerships

"IT WAS DEFINITELY NOT IN A FOLDER LABELED 'INDIAN'":
INFORMATION-SEEKING BEHAVIORS OF ARCHIVAL USERS INTERESTED IN
NATIVE AMERICAN COLLECTIONS

by
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Introduction:

The relationship between archival description and resource discovery is well established in scholarly literature. As Jimerson (2002) notes, archival description aims to achieve some level of physical and intellectual control over collections so that researchers can find the resources that they need. Catalog records, for instance, provide name, subject, and genre access to collections on a repository level. Finding aids and inventories, on the other hand, tend to include more detailed information on collections' provenance and specific contents (Jimerson, 2002). In today's networked environment, descriptive tools and metadata for discovering archival collections are expected to be available online (Konzak, Nemmers, & Thomas, 2006). Many scholars have therefore focused on the absence of online archival descriptions as the main barrier to resource discovery. Much has been written, for instance, about repositories' backlogs of unprocessed collections, which lack basic description in online catalogs and so are effectively "hidden" from researchers (Jones & Panitch, 2004; Yakel, 2005).

As some scholars are finding, however, simply having an online presence does not necessarily mean that archival collections will be found by those who need them. Inadequate and incomplete descriptions can as effectively impede the discovery of archival collections in an online environment as a lack of description (Court, 2013). The distributed nature of archival materials across physical and virtual space poses an additional challenge to researchers who are unaware that related collections may exist in more than one repository (Day, 2014). While union catalogs and cross-searchable

databases have been designed to facilitate the discovery of dispersed collections, their effectiveness has been questioned when the records upon which they are based feature inconsistent or inaccurate descriptions, and when their actual use by researchers is unclear (Davison et al., 2013; Bron, Proffitt, & Washburn, 2013).

Although archivists are aware of the need to improve the quality of archival descriptions, as well as the functionality of resource discovery and access tools, few studies have considered how user groups interested in particular cultural communities compensate for these interrelated issues. This study, however, will begin to fill this gap in the literature by exploring archival resource discovery and access within the context of a specific group of archival users: researchers interested in Native American collections. Collections related to Native Americans are not only dispersed across multiple indigenous and non-indigenous archives, but frequently described in ways that reflect inaccurate and outdated colonial ideologies. Both factors represent potential challenges for researchers attempting to identify and access collections related to Native American communities. Documenting this group's experiences with archival research will provide institutions with empirical data on ways that they can improve archival resource discovery and access tools in general, and ways that they can support archival research into underrepresented communities in particular.

Literature Review:

Over the past few decades, archivists have increasingly recognized the need to understand the ways in which researchers find, access, and use collections in their custody. Whether to provide a basis for improving their services, updating their collection policies, or justifying their continued funding, the archival community has sought researchers' views on everything from the relevance of collections to the usability of websites (Rhee, 2015). In response to the findings reported in these studies, institutions and repositories have adopted a number of strategies for increasing the discoverability of and access to their collections. Even so, the success of these strategies has yet to be evaluated from the perspective of researchers who face particular discovery and access challenges, such as those interested in Native American histories, cultures, and communities.

The earliest studies of archival researchers emerged in the 1980s as archivists dealt not only with the continued effects of a record-keeping explosion, which originated during World War II, but with the postmodern questioning of archivists' authority and objectivity in preserving society's documentary heritage. The sheer volume of records generated by government agencies during and after World War II, coupled with the growing size of individuals' professional and personal collections thanks to various technologies that facilitated the capture and documentation of information, challenged archivists to be more selective in the materials that they preserved in the limited space of their repositories. Archivists could no longer serve as passive custodians of historical

materials, but rather had to actively select—and reject—historical materials for long-term retention. With the rise of postmodernism in the 1970s, however, an emergent body of academics and activists argued that archivists had never been passive, detached custodians of collections but had always implicitly or explicitly, made selection and retention decisions according to their ideological perspectives and biases. These critics challenged the traditional authority of archival institutions for representing society's identity and memory, and thereby the use of archival materials as authoritative evidence in academic research (Blouin & Rosenberg, 2011).

To address problems of bulk and critiques of bias, archivists in the 1980s began to study how their collections were being used and how applying that knowledge could assist in appraisal decisions. Early studies—and indeed, most studies conducted since—focused on historians and their use of archival collections, given the central role that primary-source materials play in that discipline's work (Rhee, 2015). Citation analysis was the primary means of identifying use in these early studies, wherein citations of particular archival materials in historians' publications indicated the relevance of the materials for historians' research topics. In a pioneering paper for archival user studies, Elliott (1981) reviewed citation patterns in 50 journal articles that were published in 1976 and 1977 and that focused on the history of science in Great Britain, Canada, and the United States during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Elliott found that nearly a third of the citations made in these articles were to unpublished primary sources, primarily correspondence included in manuscript collections. While recognizing the "tenuous, perhaps premature" nature of drawing broad conclusions from his limited study, Elliott nevertheless suggested that archivists could use citation analysis to stay

abreast of trends in the history field and thereby make selection and appraisal decisions that would take researchers' past and present use of particular materials into account (p. 140).

Frederic Miller's 1986 study also considered the ways in which citation analysis could inform selection and appraisal processes, as he identified citation patterns in 214 scholarly articles on social history published between 1981 and 1985. Miller, however, nuanced the concept of use by moving beyond simple citation counts and examining the role that archival collections played in supporting authors' arguments. Miller distinguished between "incidental," "substantive," "important," and "fundamental" use of collections, and correlated different research topics and types of collections with different intensities of use (p. 377). Miller's findings led him to suggest a number of ways in which archivists could alter selection and appraisal practices to support social history research (e.g. by preserving twentieth-century organizational and financial materials in addition to personal papers and diaries). Noting that many social history researchers reinterpret existing histories and collections—and foreshadowing more recent discussions of archival processing and descriptive practices—Miller also noted that "it is quite possible that archivists can make as much material available through processing or rewriting and automating their descriptions of existing holdings as they can through making new acquisitions" (p. 391-392).

While these early studies provided archivists with insight into historians' use of primary source collections, as well as directions for future selection and appraisal efforts, citation studies could do little to illuminate the ways in which historians or other archival users identified and accessed relevant materials for their projects in the first place.

Analyzing scholarly citations of thirteen collections of African American and women's organizational records at the Library of Congress, Jacqueline Goggin (1986) lamented that citation studies were but an "indirect approach" to learning about archival users' information-seeking behaviors (p. 57). Yet, these behaviors were increasingly critical for archivists to understand as the Internet and other digital technologies became more widespread in the 1990s, and as archival researchers began, over time, to alter their research practices—and use of collections—accordingly (Burton, 2005). As Sinn and Soares (2014) explain, digital technologies offered an alternative to the traditional model of archival research, in which users would spend hours sifting through documents and taking painstaking notes if they found useful information. Today's researchers could instead use web-based search engines to identify relevant collections online; digital cameras, scanners, or other devices to quickly digitize materials for later review; and a multitude of software and data visualization programs to transcribe and analyze digital text. Thanks to digital technologies, the scale and pace at which archival research could be conducted rapidly increased, allowing researchers to ask new types of research questions and leading them to seek out primary sources on a wide range of topics and time periods (Mussell, 2013).

Like the exponential growth of records after World War II and the postmodern shift in academic thought during the 1970s, the advent of digital technologies has spurred archivists to again turn to their users, this time to understand how collections are being discovered and accessed and how future arrangement, description, access, and outreach decisions can better incorporate users' perspectives. Although not abandoning citation studies as a method for identifying and quantifying collections' use (see, for instance,

Slater & Hoelscher, 2014; Burns, 2012), the archival community has begun to rely more on surveys, interviews, reference question and correspondence analysis, web analytics, direct observation, or a combination thereof to identify and describe archival users' information-seeking behaviors, both in physical and virtual space (Rhee, 2015). These methods have allowed archivists to explore, both quantitatively and qualitatively, such topics as users' online searching and browsing habits; preferences regarding physical or digital access to collections; use of particular electronic retrieval tools; and difficulties in finding or accessing relevant collections online (Altman & Nemmers, 2001; Czeck, 1998; Daniels & Yakel, 2010; Duff & Johnson, 2002; Prom, 2004; Prom, 2011; Tibbo, 2003; Zhou, 2008). While the majority of these studies have continued to focus on historians as the primary users of archives, archivists have occasionally examined the ways in which researchers from other disciplines, such as anthropology and law, have incorporated archival collections into their research projects as well (Bachand, 2013; Gallina, 2010).

Studies of archival users' information-seeking behaviors have largely been conducted on an institutional basis, exploring how users identify relevant collections in one or more specific repositories (Rhee, 2015). Even so, findings across multiple studies representing multiple institutions and user populations have been relatively consistent in their reporting of archival users' information-seeking behaviors. Studies tend to agree, for instance, that archival users rely on informal sources (e.g. word-of-mouth among colleagues) as well as formal sources (e.g. citations in publications) to locate potentially relevant collections for their research (Duff & Johnson, 2002; Sinn & Soares, 2014). Users also continue to rely on print resources, such as indexes or finding aids, when necessary to identify relevant collections (Duff & Johnson, 2002), although most prefer

the convenience of searching online catalogs and databases where available (Feeney, 1999; Tibbo & Meho, 2001). In fact, archival users' reliance on the Internet for finding collections in repositories has increased dramatically in recent years; while only 15.2 percent of users surveyed in 2000 found manuscript collections online (Southwell, 2002), a 2003 report indicated that 44 percent of users surveyed used generic search engines to find collections, and 63 percent used repository websites for the same purpose (Tibbo, 2003). When searching online, archival users generally search by names, dates, places, titles, and other subject-specific terms; this reflects the subject-based nature of most archival users' research (Duff & Johnson, 2002; Duff & Stoyanova, 1998; Palmer, Teffeau, & Pirmann, 2009; Pugh, 1982). Early fears that reference archivists would be replaced with advanced search engines like Google (Cox, 2007), however, have largely been unfounded, as researchers continue to consult with archivists both in person and remotely (e.g. via email or chat services; see Duff & Johnson, 2002; Sinn & Soares, 2014). Whereas archival users appreciate the ability to access and search the full text of archival documents online, they prefer that keyword-searchable text be accompanied by digital images so that the look and feel of original documents is reproduced in the online environment. That being said, archival users still consider original documents to be the authentic versions, and prefer if possible to access original records (Maxwell, 2010; Weller, 2013).

Armed with this data on users' information-seeking behaviors, archivists have begun to consider how they can better support resource discovery and access in their repositories, with many focusing on the deficiencies of existing archival descriptive practices as an area for improvement. As Tibbo (2003) describes, archival descriptive

practices for the most part evolved independently from studies of archival users'

information-seeking behaviors. In developing and implementing a number of electronic

access tools, from MARC AMC records in the 1980s (Bearman, 1989) to multi-

institution databases of EAD (Encoded Archival Description), XML DTD (Extensible

Markup Language – Document Type Definition), and HTML (HyperText Markup

Language) encoded finding aids two decades later (Ascher & Ferris, 2012), archivists

largely operated under the assumption that providing networked access to archival

descriptions was sufficient for promoting resource discovery (Tibbo, 2003). But as a

number of authors have since argued, online access to archival descriptions is of little use

if those descriptions are incomplete, vague, or esoteric. Ellero (2013) notes how

incomplete descriptive metadata is one of the most commonly cited issues that

researchers have with libraries' web-scale discovery systems; when catalog records lack

subject or name authority control, for instance, researchers conducting keyword or topical

searches frequently do not retrieve the most precise or relevant results. When descriptive

metadata is present, however, the need for specificity and granularity is often at odds with

the desire to support non-specialist users' discovery of collections (Anderson, 2015; Han,

2012; Pal, 2010).

Two recent case studies illustrate this tension well. Addonizio and Case (2015)

outline the challenges of applying existing subject and name authority files, which

support precise information retrieval, to descriptions of highly localized collections.

These authors, both of the Special Collections Research Center at Johns Hopkins

University, received a Council on Library and Information Resources Hidden Collections

grant in 2013 to process the papers of the Roland Park Company, which was involved in

the development of several prominent Baltimore neighborhoods. At the beginning of the

project, the authors and their team of student processors intended to use standardized

descriptive elements in the collection's online finding aid; as they noted, authority control

in archival descriptions facilitates "the kinds of linking and sharing not available in a

previous age" (Addonizio & Case, 2015, p. 37). The authors planned to use the Library

of Congress Subject Headings (LCSH) for geographic names identified in the Roland

Park Company collection, since the LCSH is a widely used and trusted resource. They

soon found out, however, that the LCSH did not include many of the geographic names

that were important to the Roland Park Company collection; these places, mostly

Baltimore neighborhoods or subsets of neighborhoods, were too local to be included in

the nationwide database. Rather than describing the collection at a higher level—simply

including "Baltimore" as a geographic heading, for example—Addonizio and Case

decided to use local neighborhood names anyway. In making this decision, the authors

recognized that non-local users might not be familiar with all terms included in the

collection's description, and so they might not discover the collection as easily through

generic keyword searching as they would if they were more familiar with the terms. Yet,

the authors also felt that sacrificing specificity and granularity in description would

obscure the essential research and archival value of the collection, which was largely due

to its connections to the local community (Addonizio & Case, 2015).

Altermatt and Hilton (2012), on the other hand, chose to describe a collection of

ephemera with more generic terms, given that materials came from hundreds of sources

and covered numerous subjects. Like Addonizio and Case, these authors, both of the

Tamiment Library at New York University (NYU), also received a hidden collections

grant, this one from the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH), to process the Library's 650-linear-foot collection of printed ephemera. This collection primarily included flyers, posters, pamphlets, and other printed media collected by NYU students attending political protests during the early to mid-twentieth century. Altermatt, Hilton, and their colleagues at the Tamiment Library recognized the research value of this collection, as it represented the political propaganda of many of America's most important social and labor movements in the twentieth century. Upon receiving the NEH grant money to process the collection, the authors' plan had been to arrange and describe materials by creating organization and therein by subject. They soon found out, however, that they could not keep up with the vast number of subjects (people, places, organizations, and themes) that collection materials covered, particularly since materials were in a number of languages (English, French, German, Italian, Spanish, and Russian), and since many materials had multiple and overlapping subjects. Materials' creators were also not always clear, and even when they were, they were often obscure and now-defunct entities that the authors believed few researchers would recognize. The authors therefore decided to group materials into broad series, such as "Trade Unions," based on what they could identify about a particular flyer or pamphlet, and then include the most prominent individual or organization names reflected in each series in controlled subject headings. These authors thus sacrificed some granularity in description for a broader level of access, predicting that more users could discover the collection if well-known organizations such as the Socialist Labor Party were highlighted in collection descriptions than if lesser known entities like the New York Labor News Company were emphasized instead (Altermatt & Hilton, 2012).

With regards to both Addonizio and Case (2015) and Altermatt and Hilton (2012), archivists made specific decisions about the controlled language used in resource descriptions—decisions that would affect researchers' ability to search for and find collections online. A number of authors have considered the trade-offs of using controlled language in archival descriptions, and recommended that archivists allow for user-contributed metadata, including tags and comments, to be added to online archival descriptions to increase discovery for various audiences and address persistent descriptive dilemmas (Han, 2012). Others have suggested that archivists link collection descriptions to online crowd-sourced vocabularies, like GeoNames, which may better reflect users' knowledge bases than traditional name and subject authority files (Addonizio & Case, 2015). Still others have suggested decoupling bibliographic data from integrated library systems to allow for novel user-centered interfaces (Deng, 2010).

Many authors, however, have focused less on the particulars of archival descriptive practices and more on improving the discovery of collections dispersed across physical and virtual space. As Suzanne Gehring of Asbury University's Archives and Special Collections told Allison Day in a 2014 interview, "I realize how difficult it is to find all the repositories that have unique materials. You never know where random collections from little known sources end up. And it is impossible to determine who might have something of value to the public" (Day, 2014, p. 84). To address the challenges of dispersed collections, archivists have developed and/or contributed to large-scale aggregator systems like ArchiveGrid and Archive Finder, and local initiatives like Mapping the Stacks and the Northwest Digital Archives. These systems draw upon existing catalog records and finding aids from multiple archival institutions to create

cross-searchable databases of collection descriptions, which (ideally) eliminate researchers' need to search individual repositories' catalog and content management systems separately or know in advance which repository might house collections relevant to their research.

ArchiveGrid, for instance, is a multi-institutional database of over 4 million archival descriptions that serves as a single point of discovery for users (Bron, Proffitt, & Washburn, 2013). Developed by the Online Computer Library Center (OCLC) in the late 1990s, ArchiveGrid consists primarily of MARC catalog records that libraries and other institutions that house archival materials submit to the OCLC's WorldCat database, the world's largest union catalog for library content (ArchiveGrid, 2016; WorldCat, 2016). Records contributed to WorldCat are identified for inclusion in ArchiveGrid based on the values that catalogers give certain fields in collections' MARC records (e.g. values that indicate that materials are unpublished). As of December 2015, approximately 1 percent of WorldCat's over 340 million catalog records were considered "archival" records, or descriptions of archival collections (Dooley, 2015). As Jackie Dooley (2015) of OCLC Research noted, however, there is no easy way to describe archival collections using MARC fields, which were primarily created to suit item-level description of individual library titles; thus, identification and extraction of MARC records from WorldCat for inclusion in ArchiveGrid is an imperfect process. Given these limitations and the fact that WorldCat only includes catalog records submitted by member institutions, ArchiveGrid also accepts finding aids in EAD, HTML, or PDF format that are submitted separately by individual repositories; this allows users to discover collections held by

smaller institutions that do not necessarily have the resources to maintain OCLC membership (ArchiveGrid, 2016; WorldCat, 2016).

While ArchiveGrid is a free service, other aggregator systems for archival descriptions are subscription based. Archive Finder is one example. Powered by ProQuest and available for an annual subscription fee, this system merges catalog records, microfilm/microfiche finding aids, links to online finding aids, and collection descriptions submitted directly by repositories into comprehensive records for collections of primary source materials from the United States, the United Kingdom, and Ireland (Archive Finder, 2016). Collection information included in Archive Finder is limited, however, to the collection name, dates, format and extent of materials, main topics, and a brief description; the database also updates less frequently than ArchiveGrid, which regularly harvests records from WorldCat (Archive Finder, 2016; ArchiveGrid, 2016). In addition to these large-scale aggregator systems, archivists have also supported more local aggregator initiatives like Mapping the Stacks, which identifies archival collections that chronicle African American experiences in Chicago between the 1930s and 1970s (Mapping the Stacks, 2016); and the Northwest Digital Archives, which includes over 2,300 EAD finding aids contributed by academic institutions in Idaho, Montana, Oregon, and Washington (Cornish, 2004). Local aggregator initiatives are still emerging, however, as archival repositories develop viable partnerships with each other and with community organizations, and as they figure out how best to pool their collective resources.

Despite efforts to bring descriptions of dispersed collections together in aggregator systems, reports of the effectiveness of these systems for helping researchers

locate relevant collections are mixed. Data from aggregators themselves provide insight into the frequency that users access these systems, but they do little to help archivists understand how the systems may (or may not) have helped users find what they need. ArchiveGrid, for example, reports that it has had nearly 6 million page views between November 2011 and September 2016, amounting to nearly 2 million unique users in all. Even so, the number of weekly visits by unique users has fallen from a high of 20,578 users for one week in 2014 to 11,783 users by September 2016 (ArchiveGrid, 2016). At a glance, this data would suggest that fewer users today are relying on ArchiveGrid for their research purposes than two years ago. But lacking context for researchers' use and nonuse of the system, archivists can only speculate as to the reasons for the perceived decline—and if the decline is even a point of concern. Researchers who may have used ArchiveGrid during the initial stages of their research in 2014, for instance, may have successfully identified the collections on which they want to focus by now. Consequently, they may no longer need the assistance of an aggregator like ArchiveGrid, since they know which repository to visit or which repository's website to frequent.

Few studies, however, provide such contextualizing information or confirm such hypotheses. No large-scale empirical studies appear to investigate specifically how archival researchers utilize aggregator systems like ArchiveGrid to discover collections relevant to their research topics, or how researchers rate the value of these systems for helping them discover previously unknown collections. Available data that speaks to these topics comes instead from qualitative and quantitative studies that examine archival users' information-seeking behaviors more broadly. In her survey of researchers using the Western Historical Collections at the University of Oklahoma, for instance, Southwell

(2002) found that only one person out of the 230 who responded to the question, "How did you learn of WHC's manuscript holdings?", cited use of a union catalog as a discovery mechanism. More recent qualitative studies, such as Patrick Dollar's 2015 investigation of the information-seeking behaviors of archival researchers at three central North Carolina universities, have reported that researchers have since begun to turn more to aggregator systems like ArchiveGrid, or to its parent system WorldCat, for an initial impression of repositories that may hold collections relevant to their research (see also, Hamburger, 2004; Duff & Johnson, 2002). But participants in these studies rarely relied on aggregator systems as their primary method of identifying relevant collections, preferring instead to search individual repository websites for detailed collection information (Dollar, 2015; Hamburger, 2004).

Some studies have also suggested that aggregator systems may not be as well known to novice researchers as they are to more experienced researchers, like those consulted for Dollar's study. Hamburger (2004), for instance, surveyed a cross-section of mostly student (undergraduate and graduate) researchers at six major research libraries about their strategies for identifying and accessing relevant archival collections online. While 92 percent of respondents reported daily computer use and 75 percent claimed that they could navigate online environments with ease, most respondents nevertheless continued to locate relevant archival collections by consulting footnotes in books or articles. As Hamburger stated, even though respondents indicated that they did use libraries' online catalogs to identify collections, "they are still guessing which library to contact and searching one catalog at a time. They are not availing themselves of new online methods of finding collections of materials in repositories whose holdings either

do not appear in the older printed sources or who have recently acquired collections" (p. 83).

Researchers interested in Native American histories, cultures, and communities appear to be at a particular disadvantage when it comes to finding relevant archival collections. Due to historical collecting practices and the legacy of colonization, archival collections related to Native Americans are widely dispersed across indigenous and non-indigenous repositories (Cooper, 2004; Rath, 2004; Smith, 2015). Records in non-indigenous repositories, for instance, were often created by nineteenth- and twentieth-century government officials, missionaries, anthropologists, or even casual cultural buffs who documented Native communities and cultural practices, either openly or secretively, for their own purposes (Baker, 1998). Given the various identities of these individuals, the records that they produced made their way into a wide range of institutions, from government archives (for public officials) to university special collections (for affiliated research faculty like anthropologists) to religious and private archives (for missionaries; see Lazlo, 2006). In contrast, records in indigenous archives, such as tribal government archives, have usually been created by Native people themselves to document a range of historical and contemporary activities. The fact that Native American collections are dispersed in this way increases the likelihood—as with other dispersed collections—that relevant materials will be overlooked in generic online searches. However, researchers interested in these collections may face additional challenges to discovery and access given different institutions' policies regarding Native American collections. Many tribal archives, for instance, restrict access to registered tribal members only, while some non-indigenous (but culturally affiliated) archives, like the Archive Center at the National

Museum of the American Indian, restrict access to culturally sensitive materials. Still

others, like the National Archives and Records Administration, provide full and open

access to records, except when materials fall under normal privacy laws (Haynes et al.,

2016).

Additional challenges to the discovery of and access to Native American

collections comes from another legacy of colonization: western descriptive practices.

Descriptions of Native-related collections in non-indigenous archives are notoriously

inconsistent in the terms that they use for Native peoples and places, again impeding

online search and retrieval of collection descriptions (Miner, 2009). These

inconsistencies exist largely because archivists—mostly non-Natives themselves—have

followed the traditional western practice of literary warrant and looked to original records

for terms to be used in collection descriptions. Because records were frequently created

by non-Native individuals documenting communities and cultures that they understood as

outsiders, however, terms used in the records often reflect incomplete and biased views

of Native communities. Thus, the Diné people became the Navajo, and the Lakota,

Dakota, and Nakota peoples became the Sioux, in many historical records and associated

archival descriptions, despite the names that these communities give themselves (Duarte

and Belarde-Lewis, 2015).

So-called "authority" files, which were again created by western colonizers,

likewise reflect static, colonial views of diverse Native communities. The Library of

Congress Subject Headings, actively maintained since 1898, instructs catalogers to use

"Indians of North America" when referring to Native communities, even though this

phrase reflects erroneous assumptions about Native peoples (that they were *indios*, as

Spanish settlers originally thought), and recalls terms used by government authorities (e.g. "American Indians") to define and manage racial and class groups (Duarte and Belarde-Lewis, 2015). Duarte and Belarde-Lewis (2015) explore these issues in depth when they discuss the effects of western and indigenous ontologies on descriptive practices in archival repositories. In some repositories, efforts are being made to catalog Native-related collections according to indigenous worldviews. However, since this often involves emphasizing the local perspectives of multiple indigenous communities by using more specific terms for people and places than "Indians of North America," well-meaning efforts to decolonize archival descriptions can actually impede online resource discovery by removing controlled vocabulary terminology designed to improve the precision of information retrieval. Scholars and activists have recognized these challenges and increasingly called for repositories that house Native-related collections to partner with Native communities to improve archival descriptions and descriptive practices. The suggestion has been made to annotate existing archival descriptions with additional terms grounded in indigenous worldviews, which would support broader resource discovery and access (Joffrion & Fernandez, 2015). Calls for collaboration on joint initiatives to make more resources available and cross-searchable online have also increased (Crouch, 2010; Bernholz, Zillig, & Weakly, 2006).

Although such efforts are being made to increase the discoverability of and access to Native American archival collections, there is little empirical evidence that these efforts are actually benefiting researchers—or that researchers are even aware of the issues that they may encounter in searching for and within Native-related collections. Few studies to date have incorporated the perspectives of archival researchers interested

in Native American collections, and so little is known about these researchers' current methods of finding collections that they need. This study, however, will begin to fill this gap in the literature by exploring how researchers interested in Native American histories, cultures, and communities go about finding relevant archival collections despite the challenges of geographic dispersal and inaccurate, inconsistent descriptions. By going directly to researchers, this study will seek to answer three main questions:

1. How do researchers interested in Native American histories, cultures, and/or communities currently find relevant archival collections in dispersed environments?
2. How do these researchers currently compensate for inconsistent and inaccurate descriptions—if they are aware of inconsistencies and inaccuracies at all?
3. What tools and strategies for finding relevant collections would best benefit these researchers, from their points of view?

The findings from this study will hopefully have implications not only for archival repositories that want to increase discoverability of and access to Native American collections, but for repositories that house collections related to other historically underrepresented communities as well.

Methodology:

In seeking to 1) illuminate the information-seeking behaviors of archival researchers interested in Native American collections; and 2) situate these behaviors within the context of ongoing debates over culturally appropriate archival description and adequate resource discovery tools for dispersed archival collections, this exploratory study used qualitative methods for data collection and analysis. Semi-structured interviews were used to collect information about study participants' information-seeking behaviors and research activities, and to identify current information sources and tools that participants use to find relevant collections. Semi-structured interviews are the preferred method for data collection in this case, since they can accommodate variability within participants' responses while still adhering to the study's particular research topics (Wildemuth, 2009).

Graduate students were chosen as the subjects of this study because of their level of archival research acumen: while they may have done research in archives before, graduate students are unlikely to be as familiar with relevant archival collections, or with the particular challenges of locating Native American collections in physical and virtual space, at this stage in their education as more experienced researchers (e.g. academic scholars or professional researchers who have worked with particular collections or archives for years). Even so, graduate students tend to have complex research questions that are not usually answered by consulting a single collection or primary source, as is often the case with undergraduate researchers; rather, graduate students must frequently

consult multiple collections, sometimes at multiple repositories, in order to make their

case or build their argument. Early on in their research, these students must develop

strategies for locating the information that they need, and they must do so within the time

frame imposed by their degree program and within the constraints imposed by

collections' geographic dispersal and level and detail of description. Archivists and other

information professionals can therefore learn a great deal from graduate students

interested in Native American collections about the ways in which patrons with complex

research topics and varying levels of archival research experience identify and locate

relevant materials.

Recruiting efforts were concentrated on graduate students enrolled at a single

public university in central North Carolina who used archival materials related to Native

Americans in the course of their research. To identify potential recruits, the study author

used purposive and snowball sampling, both of which are fairly common techniques for

recruiting participants in exploratory research (Wildemuth, 2009). The author first

reviewed student profile pages on university departmental websites and noted graduate

students who expressed interest in studying Native American histories, cultures, and/or

communities. In some cases, students described their dissertation topics in depth on their

profile pages, and so their interest in Native studies was clear. In other cases, students

only listed general terms to describe their research interests, like "Native American

studies" or "enthnohistories of the Plains peoples." Nevertheless, the author took note of

students with both types of profiles. The author also looked for students who stated

explicitly that they used archival materials in their research or whose research topics

suggested that they likely used archival materials in their research. An example of the

latter case was with students who studied Native communities in the colonial era; the presumption was that these students would likely use archival materials in the course of their research. A total of nine potential recruits (all doctoral candidates) were identified across three different departments: history, anthropology, and a humanities-based interdisciplinary studies department. The author then cross-referenced departmental profiles with the institutional directory to ensure that these students were still enrolled in the university (and the profiles were therefore not out of date); only currently enrolled students were deemed eligible for participation, since they were expected to have the moderate level of research experience desired. In two cases, students whose profiles remained on departmental websites were no longer listed in the institutional directory; additional searching on the main university website revealed that these two students had graduated within the past year (their names were listed in digitized copies of graduation programs). Eliminating these two students left the author with a list of seven potential recruits.

In addition to reviewing students' departmental profiles, the study author also emailed professors in the university's history, anthropology, archaeology, and law programs, as well as professors in the humanities-based interdisciplinary studies department, whose own departmental profiles listed an interest in Native American histories, cultures, and/or communities. In correspondence with these professors, the author explained the purpose of the study and asked if the professors knew of any graduate students who would be eligible to interview. Professors were asked for recommendations in the event that some students who would be eligible for the study did not have a departmental profile online, but would be recommended by professors who

knew of their work and their interests. Of the seven professors contacted, all seven

responded. Three professors (two in the law program and one in the anthropology

department) did not know of any students who would fit study parameters; both law

professors stated that no one in their program focused on Native law, while the professor

of anthropology recommended contacting the history department instead. The other four

professors, representing the history and interdisciplinary studies departments, each

recommended between one and four specific students to contact; three professors each

recommended one particular student in the interdisciplinary studies program, who was

well known for being involved in a Native student support group on campus. Of the six

unique students recommended by professors, all but one had been identified by searching

students' departmental profiles (the sixth student did not have an online profile,

validating the need for a two-pronged approach to recruitment).

Between the departmental profiles and the professors' recommendations, the

author created a list of eight potential study participants and sent recruitment emails to

each student's institutional email address. An average of two emails was needed to

solicit a response, although two students never responded to recruitment emails. Of the

six students who did respond to recruitment emails, all six agreed to be interviewed about

their research topics and their use of Native American archival materials. Interviews

were conducted by phone in January and February of 2017, with each participant

providing informed consent prior to the interview. Audio from the interviews was

captured using Audacity, a free, open-source digital audio recording and editing

computer application downloaded to the study author's personal computer. Interviews

were transcribed by the author and coded for content using qualitative content analysis;

audio and transcript files were saved on the author's personal, password-protected computer and backed up on an external hard drive kept in a locked drawer in the author's personal desk. Transcripts were reviewed by a second coder (the author's advisor) for additional reliability.

Results:

On average, interviews lasted approximately 31minutes each; the longest interview was 58 minutes, while the shortest interview was 14 minutes. While the exact order and wording of questions differed in each interview (as per semi-structured interviews in general), each participant was asked about several main topics intended to address the study's central research questions. Participants were first asked about their major and degree program, their past experience with archival research, and their current dissertation topic related to Native American histories, cultures, and/or communities. Participants were then asked to describe the archival collections that they had consulted or planned to consult for their dissertations, as well as their methods for identifying, locating, and accessing those collections. Several participants voluntarily described the challenges that they faced in identifying, locating, and accessing collections; those who did not were expressly asked about their research challenges. Participants were also asked if they thought that the challenges they faced were unique to researching Native American histories, cultures, and communities, or if the challenges were common to archival research in general. Finally, participants were asked to suggest ways in which archivists and other information professionals could help address the discovery, description, and access challenges that they faced while doing their research. A complete list of questions used to guide each interview is included in Appendix A.

Participant Characteristics

Although participants evenly represented three distinct, formal majors—with two each enrolled in the university's history, anthropology, and humanities-based interdisciplinary studies programs—all six participants self-identified as Native studies scholars. All six participants interviewed were also doctoral candidates, although at different stages of their programs: one student had just obtained candidacy a month prior to the interview, while the most senior student was entering the sixth year of study. The majority of students (three of six), however, were entering the second or third year of their programs. Participants represented a broader range of majors on the undergraduate and Master's levels, including public history, public health, education, and music/vocal performance, as well as history and anthropology.

Despite the fact that the three doctoral programs represented varied in terms of average time to degree, with anthropology students taking nearly eighteen months longer to complete their degrees than history or interdisciplinary studies students (UNC-CH Graduate School, 2015), all six students had determined their dissertation topics at the time of their interviews, and students in the same years of their programs were typically at the same stage of research. Thus, the student who had recently obtained candidacy was just beginning to identify relevant sources; three students in their second and third years of study had already identified relevant sources and were in the process of accessing and reading through them; and the two students in their final years of study had already identified and accessed relevant sources and were preparing to begin the writing process (although both signaled that research would continue during the writing process). Dissertation topics included political, social, and ethno-histories of specific Native

nations in the colonial era (the topic for both history majors); twentieth-century relations between Native nations and the Federal government (the topic for both interdisciplinary studies majors); social and genetic factors affecting public health in Native communities (the topic for one of the anthropology majors, who concentrated in biological anthropology); and Native art as a form of political and culture expression (the topic of the second anthropology major, who concentrated in museum studies).

It should be noted that recruitment efforts were not limited to doctoral candidates, and Master's students conducting archival research in Native American collections would have been welcome to participate in this study, as recruitment emails emphasized. However, no professor who was contacted for recommendations of potential study participants appeared to know of any Master's students at the university who would fit study parameters, and none of the online profiles consulted by the author indicated that any Master's student fit study parameters either. Thus, none of the eight students that the author ultimately contacted about interviews were Master's students, although three of the six study participants had obtained their Master's as part of their current Ph.D. programs.

Similarly, of the eight students contacted, two were male and six were female; of the six who ultimately participated in the study, five were female and one was male. Efforts were not made to control for gender. Nonetheless, the gender composition of study participants reflects a recent increase in the number of doctoral degrees awarded to women majoring in a social sciences or history field, a sign that more women are entering doctoral programs in these fields in the first place. According to the National Center for Education Statistics, the total number of doctoral degrees awarded to females in fields

like anthropology, history, and public history increased by 18.6 percent between the 2008-2009 school year and the 2013-2014 school year. In contrast, the total number of doctoral degrees awarded to males majoring in a social sciences or history field during the same time grew by only 6 percent (U.S. Department of Education, 2015). Given these statistics, the gender imbalance among study participants does not undermine the study's objectivity or invalidate the study's results. The imbalance may simply reflect an overall trend towards more females in the social sciences and history fields.

Participant Methodologies and Archival Records Consulted

Although approaching their topics from different backgrounds and perspectives, all six participants described an interdisciplinary research methodology. As per study parameters, each participant relied to a greater or lesser extent on primary-source/archival research to support their dissertation topics. For the purposes of this study, "archival materials" was defined as primary-source collections of documents, maps, photographs, diaries, newspapers, etc. that are preserved and made available in a repository operated by a government entity, university or college, historical society, non-profit, or other institution. The two history majors, both specializing in the colonial era, drew the most extensively upon archival materials to support their primary arguments. The other four participants typically used (or planned to use) archival materials in conjunction with oral histories, archaeological data, qualitative interviews, material culture analysis, or in one case, quantitative surveys and biological specimens, to support their arguments; even the two history majors used (or planned to use) archaeological data and oral histories as supplemental evidence. In all cases, though, participants either implied or explicitly stated that archival materials helped them situate their topics in the appropriate historical context. All stated that oral histories would help them carry that context into the present.

Of the six participants surveyed, three (both interdisciplinary studies students and one anthropology student) mainly consulted Federal government records for their research. These records included Congressional acts related to Native communities (e.g. the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act, which addresses rights to Native cultural property; and provisions in the 2015 Every Student Succeeds Act that affect Native education); records of Executive Agencies that play or played a direct role in shaping Federal Indian policy (e.g. the Bureau of Indian Affairs); and records of Executive Agencies that were not specifically involved in Federal Indian policy, but that collected information about Native communities (e.g. the Census Bureau). While these participants primarily used Federal records, they also each utilized tribal government records from the particular communities of interest. These records mainly included tribal council meeting minutes and tribal newspapers and newsletters, although one anthropology major also supplemented his/her work with early twentieth-century accounts by ethnographers and public health officials who had visited the community of interest.

Of the three remaining participants, both history majors utilized European governments' colonial-era records and travel accounts of European soldiers and traders who visited colonial-era Native communities as their main archival sources. Due to the scarcity of documentary sources on his/her Native community of interest, one of these students also relied heavily on colonial-era maps of the interior United States. The sixth student (the second anthropology major) primarily consulted archived oral history interviews and museum accession records, as well as the art and artifacts that accession records described.

Participants' Discovery Strategies – Finding Relevant Materials

Participants described a number of different strategies that they used to initially discover where archival materials potentially relevant to their research might be found. These strategies fell on a spectrum, from those used at the beginning of the research process to those used as research became more focused. Thus, despite the fact that participants had widely divergent dissertation topics, the discovery strategies that participants used at any given time tended to correlate with their stage of the research process.

In thinking back to their initial stages of research, all six participants cited their advisors as one of the most important early sources of information on repositories that housed collections relevant to their topics. These advisors, who were typically formal members of students' dissertation committees, were sought out for advice because of their expertise in their field and thus their presumed familiarity with relevant archival institutions and their holdings. "A lot of [my early archival research] started with suggestions from my advisor," one of the history majors stated. "She has advised many students who've done research in French Louisiana. So, she was very helpful for that. And then someone else on my committee, [name omitted], studies New Spain and colonial New Mexico, so she kind of helped point me to collections and repositories there." Another participant informally ranked his/her committee members' potential for offering helpful archival advice based on their academic backgrounds and their presumed familiarity with archival research:

> "My committee is made up of an interesting interdisciplinary mix of folks. My primary advisor is a historian by training, and so certainly he's the one I'd go to first about archival work. Also on my committee, I have an attorney-slash-historian, so I'd probably go to him next. I've got a couple of ed researchers, educational researchers, that are more on the sociology/policy spectrum, and so

> I'd be less likely to go to them. And then my last person is an attorney/social worker, so she would also not be someone I'd necessarily go to for archival help." (Student 1)

Even as they sought suggestions from their advisors, however, participants simultaneously recognized the limits of their advisors' individual knowledge and experience, particularly when they viewed their dissertation topics as being wholly new contributions to their field. Students whose topics were situated in the twentieth or twenty-first centuries (four of the six interviewed) were more likely than those whose topics were situated in earlier centuries to characterize their work in such terms, and so ask others within their professional and personal networks for advice. As one of the interdisciplinary studies students working on twentieth-century relations between the Federal government and Native tribes noted, "I talk to professors at [university name omitted], advisors I have, which can sometimes be harder than others because Native American history is so untapped that a lot of times what you're looking at has never been touched." Another student (an anthropology major examining infectious disease rates in twentieth-century Native communities) expressed a similar point, stating that "not that many people have been doing contemporary studies on Native populations" in general and that advisors at his/her university did not study his/her Native community of interest in particular.

This was in contrast to the two participants (both history majors) whose topics were situated in colonial America. These students both characterized their work as following in the footsteps of their advisors, usually in terms of the geographic region and temporal period of focus. In turn, they were less likely to express a need for advice from other scholars or professionals about potentially relevant repositories to consult. These

students were also more likely to have preexisting knowledge of relevant repositories for their particular research, due in some cases to Master's or undergraduate work on the same topic or a closely related one, and in other cases to the limited number and prominence of repositories that house colonial-era collections (e.g. the Library of Congress). For instance, as one history major said when asked how he/she identified potentially relevant repositories, "Typically speaking, I actually would know" of relevant repositories already and would not necessarily have to ask an advisor for suggestions.

When faced with the limitations of individual advisors' knowledge of potentially relevant repositories, other participants tapped into their extended network of friends, fellow graduate students, and personal and professional mentors (those not on their dissertation committees) for additional suggestions and advice. Often, these communications were informal; as one participant noted, he/she did "a lot of asking around and putting up notes on Facebook and Twitter to see if anybody knew" of institutions that held archival materials relevant to his/her topic. Participants alternately characterized these informal, personal contacts as "the pipeline," "the grapevine," or another shorthand term for a loosely bound community centered on their particular subset of their academic field. One participant described contacting "people that I know here [on campus] that are involved in Native health or in other Native groups that have friends who know friends who have worked with so and so, just kind of along the grapevine." Several participants were also involved in Native American student groups on campus, which often facilitated contact and communication with other Native communities, both locally and nationally. As one interdisciplinary studies major noted after describing his/her network of friends and advisors:

"Most of those folks I just rattled off to you are Native scholars. Some of them are not. My primary [formal] advisor is not. And some of those friends and colleagues are not. But I do, in thinking of my work as a sort of decolonizing project, try to receive mentorship and advice from other scholars whose work is grounded in a sense of community. Those tend to be the places I tend to go, as much as possible, early for advice." (Student 1)

As participants delved further into their research, they increasingly sought suggestions about potentially relevant archival materials not only from their personal networks of advisors, friends, and mentors, but from the larger scholarly and professional communities surrounding their topics of interest as well. This was especially the case as participants moved from identifying institutions that housed potentially relevant collections for their topic to determining those collections' actual relevance as evidence for their arguments. In such cases, participants often turned to secondary sources by scholars who had used collections of potential interest; these sources ranged from published monographs to articles in academic journals. Participants most often reported consulting secondary sources' bibliographies for insight into the specific content of particular collections' series and subseries. As one interdisciplinary studies major said, "A lot of what I'm doing on the historical background piece is just looking at secondary source material that folks have already pulled together. There's a great book already in existence, written by a tribal community member, about the educational history of my community. That's been a great help." Another participant concurred: "I spend a lot of time looking at the secondary sources of scholars that are doing similar works to me…to see what kinds of records they're looking at." This student went on to add that secondary sources served as a "sort of inspiration…especially when you're trying to figure out where to start in an agency's records. That can be really useful at eliminating some folders or some boxes even, to say, okay, I don't need to look at that, I don't need to look

at that." A third participant took for granted the necessity of consulting secondary sources for potentially relevant primary sources: "*As we tend to do*, I'm looking at books that are very relevant in my field, I'm looking at bibliographies, and the way they were talking about the sources and the different collections of sources" [emphasis added].

While secondary sources and their bibliographies could help participants identify a canon of authoritative or commonly used archival materials for their topics, participants who were researching previously unexamined topics or communities found secondary sources to be less helpful—if relevant secondary sources existed at all. As one anthropology major remarked, "I just don't think there's much research done on Native American populations, particularly contemporary research. I don't think there's funding." Lacking relevant secondary sources to help jumpstart archival research, this student turned to Google and other search engines to try to identify relevant repositories and collections on his/her own. Even so, the student recognized the inefficiency of this discovery method: "I spend a lot more time trying to find things then I do actually finding anything useful."

Discovery Challenges – and Participants' Strategies to Compensate

As the anthropology student quoted above demonstrates, participants at some point turned from consulting advisors and secondary sources for suggestions about relevant collections and repositories to searching for relevant materials on their own. In the anthropology student's case, this transition happened early in the course of research when it became clear that advisors and secondary sources had yet to examine his/her topic of interest in the appropriate depth. In most other participants' cases, however, the shift from word-of-mouth advice and bibliographic citation mining to individualized,

topic-specific searching came *after* participants had identified repositories that housed

potentially relevant collections but *before* participants accessed those collections and

determined actual relevance. In other words, suggestions from their personal networks

and from secondary sources could usually get students to the point of knowing which

repositories housed potentially relevant collections for their research, but word-of-mouth

and secondary sources were not typically enough to tell students the exact contents (and

therefore, actual relevance) of those collections.

For more detailed information on collection contents, participants turned

primarily to two sources: online collection catalogs, inventories, and/or finding aids; and

archivists or other information professionals who worked closely with the collections of

interest. All participants relied on both finding aids and archivists for collection-specific

details prior to access, but most began with online catalogs and finding aids before later

contacting repository staff with specific requests or questions. As one participant who

had just obtained candidacy put it, "I'm still pretty early in the [research] process, and so

I'm not quite at the point, you know, [where I am] working super closely with archivists

to find a specific document or something like that is really essential. I'm kind of still at

the mass collection stage." As another participant early in the research process described:

> "I usually start with the [university library's] website and try to do what I can
> from there. When I'm looking for more concrete statistical resources, I usually
> use Google and you know, I can usually find some of the older, especially
> nationally published, things, I can usually find one year, and then I have to dig in
> other places to find the other applicable years. But that's how I think I ended up
> running across the stuff in the National Archives. There was a reference to it in a
> Google search." (Student 3)

When the student could no longer find relevant sources online, he/she then turned to

professionals at relevant repositories for help.

In fact, participants seemed to feel a responsibility to try to find relevant archival materials (or descriptions of them) online before asking archivists about them, although no one expressed that responsibility in exactly those terms. Rather, most participants described exhausting all known sources and search strategies online before turning to archivists for help. Typically, this was the point at which participants ran into challenges finding specific records or records descriptions online. All six participants reported challenges to discovery, although the nature of those challenges tended to differ depending on the participants' academic field and time period of study. Both history majors, for instance, cited language barriers as a significant challenge to identifying relevant documents within repositories' holdings; both were researching Native communities in the colonial eras, and many online finding aids for documents that they needed were in French and Spanish, as the documents were housed abroad in French and Spanish archives. While differences in language (used here in the sense of a community's mother tongue) were not significant barriers to discovery for other participants, differences in specific word choice or terminology were. Nearly all participants expressed some level of frustration that archival finding aids did not describe materials with the keywords and terms that would have helped them determine materials' relevance easily, such as the names of specific Native leaders or tribes. They also expressed frustration when archival descriptions clearly reflected western, colonial, or Eurocentric views. As one participant lamented, finding aids tend to "mention everything, every keyword or description, that is relevant to Europeans in the documents, and then they don't mention what Native peoples are involved." Even when catalogs or finding aids included the names of Native individuals or communities, they were often

plagued by misspellings that added another layer of difficulty to discovery. As a participant working with historical records of his/her family (members of a Native community themselves) remarked:

> "So, one of the last names in my family is [omitted]. [This surname] is spelled five different ways. So any time I go to search in the archives for that part of the family, I have to search every imaginable spelling and misspelling of that last name before I'm satisfied that I've really gotten everybody, and even then, it's possible, obviously, that I haven't gotten all of the possible misspellings and so I'm missing somebody that way." (Student 1)

Although problems related to the specificity and accuracy of archival descriptions were identified at most repositories that participants consulted, participants most often singled out Federal repositories—the Library of Congress and the National Archives in particular—for describing Native-related collections in overly generic terms. In describing the challenges of identifying relevant materials at the Library of Congress, for instance, one participant recounted:

> "I knew that they had a lot of documents there, and they were the most challenging place to find so far. Just because, at least for me, I found that the names attached to some of the documents I was looking for – the collections were not labeled how I would expect them to be labeled, or how necessarily I've heard them referred to… I think the Library of Congress called, you know, [relevant records] "Florida colonial documents," or something like that… I mean, it came up in my searches because I searched for, you know, all the terms I could think of, but I knew the Library of Congress had these documents, I just had no idea what it was labeled under." (Student 4)

Another participant described a similar experience when searching for documentation in the National Archives of a particular museum exhibit sponsored by a Federal agency during the U.S. bicentennial. The exhibit was about Native American history, and Native employees of the Federal agency that sponsored the exhibit had collaborated on its content and design. The student hoped to learn more about the Native employees who had been involved in the exhibit, and so he/she had consulted online and analog finding

aids for the records of that particular Federal agency. However, it was not until the

student had actually accessed physical records of the agency—and even then, not records

in a series that seemed most likely from the student's perspective to contain

documentation of the exhibit—that the student found relevant information. As the

student recalled:

> "I had looked through a whole thing of just boring administrative records about [specific topic omitted], but there was really nothing. And then I came across this book that had – it was actually one of the books for the exhibit that was given out to the public…But it was definitely not in a folder labeled "Indian"…that would have been wonderful if that had happened, but unfortunately not." (Student 2)

Participants who relied more heavily on collections housed in university archives

and special collections reported more satisfaction with the accuracy and specificity of

online finding aids. One student praised a particular university's online collections guide

as "impressive," going on to say that staff there appeared to "know what to expect for

what scholars typically ask them about using these [materials], so it's just a very

thorough sort of overview of what every collection is, how to access it, what's in it."

Another student described a different university's 2,000-page online finding aid for one

collection as "very, very detailed and also searchable." In fact, several participants noted

the importance of not just detailed and accurate online catalogs and collection guides, but

also ones with sophisticated search capabilities. Universities were more widely reported

to have sophisticated and user-friendly search options on their websites than Federal

institutions, as they featured links to digitized primary and secondary sources and

references to outside collections as well. But as participants who worked with Federal

records became more familiar with records' provenance, they were able to search for

relevant collections more effectively. One student using National Archives records

actively worked to learn more about the history and functions of different Federal

agencies—in his/her words, to "think like an archivist"—so that finding relevant

documents in agencies' records would be easier. Another student found that his/her

success in locating relevant archival materials increased the more he/she read about the

dissertation topic: "The more research I did, I started to find individuals who I knew

visited people that I studied, and so I could keep an eye out" for their names in finding

aids. Such roundabout ways of addressing archival descriptions' shortcomings for

Native-related collections were common among study participants.

When participants were stymied by archival descriptions (or lack thereof) for the

collections in which they were interested, they ultimately reached out to archivists at the

institutions in which the collections were housed for assistance. Although participants

overall were less satisfied with the specificity and accuracy of Federal institutions' online

finding aids versus universities' online finding aids, the participants that reported the

most positive interactions with archivists were those who were researching Federal

records. As one participant recounted when discussing his/her experiences with the

National Archives staff:

> "There was this one woman at the archives, and she was actually out in – I want
> to say possibly the Alaska regional archives that's now based in Seattle – I think
> that's right – and I talked to her and she was super, super helpful, and I think
> she's the most knowledgeable person on Native American records at the National
> Archives in the country. She's really great. And I can give you her name, if you
> don't know of her. And she really helped me a lot with all of this, she just has
> such a breadth of knowledge." (Student 2)

As another participant recalled, he/she was having trouble figuring out which National

Archives regional repository would house records of the children from a particular Native

community who were forced to attend government-run boarding schools. Although the

student scoured the National Archives' website for this information, the student could not find it online and was on the verge of traveling hundreds of miles to the wrong regional archives. At the last minute, "just on a whim," the student called another of the National Archives' regional archives, and the archivist there explained that they had the records and could scan and send them to the student for a minimal fee. For both participants, these experiences reinforced the importance of "voice to voice or person to person" interaction with archivists and other repository staff who were more familiar with records' contents and locations than researchers, and who could more readily and succinctly describe relevant materials than static online finding aids. In the words of one of these students, "I think it helps that people know who knows their stuff and will say, oh you have to talk to this person, they really understand these particular records, so that kind of information gets shared." Even when participants did not have as much direct, one-on-one interaction with archivists—often when students were using university collections with detailed finding aids—they still recognized (and appreciated) the knowledge and expertise that went into crafting the collection guides that made their research possible.

Access Methods and Access Challenges

Once participants had consulted online finding aids and/or consulted archivists about potentially relevant materials, they typically were ready to access records of interest. In some cases, records had been digitized and made available online through institutional websites or catalogs. One student who was working with historical public health data, for instance, was able to find full data sets online through a database offered by the university library; all the student had to do was enter his/her university

identification username and password to access the data. Similarly, another student was

able to access full-text government documents through the U.S. Government Publishing

Office's free online FDsys database. Even so, no participant was able to access all

necessary archival materials for their dissertation topics online, and some even struggled

to name any primary sources that they had been able to view online:

> "Yeah, I'm trying to think – I think I use – I'm trying to think – I've used a few guides by the National Archives that'll have – I'm trying to think, it's been a long time ago – yeah, I will say, not even on this project, I have done some research for my advisor actually to – looking up some military, Department of the Army, records, and so I've used – the National Archives has I think a publication on using military records, I think? It's been a long time, and so I think I used that once…" (Student 2)

> "I'm trying to think – I know I accessed digitized copies of French documents in the Library of Congress, and also at the Newberry Library. Generally speaking, the ones that have been digitally reproduced or whatever, have been on microfilm rather than digitized." (Student 5)

Other participants identified online sources that would be helpful for their research in the

future, but were not currently of use because records scanned to date fell outside of their

parameters of interest. As one participant said, "The problem with that [database] is that

I think they only have their records fully digitized as far back as 1994, and most of what

I'm looking at in the early part [of the dissertation] is far earlier than in 1994."

With relevant materials yet to be digitized and made available online, participants

had to access at least some materials in person or through remote requests. Although all

participants had in-person visits to archival repositories planned for the future,

participants in the first, second, and third years of their programs were less likely to have

visited an archival repository and accessed materials in person than participants in later

years of study. Rather, participants in the early years of their programs were more likely

to have requested records remotely, as they had yet to receive research grants or

scholarships that would support their travel. In some cases, as with the student who

contacted the National Archives about boarding school records, remote requests were

sent to archivists for paper or digital copies of records that participants could keep, but

for which they had to pay a fee. Just as they could not afford to visit repositories in

person, however, some students struggled to find funds to pay for copies of records as

well. As one student remarked, "Ordering scans long distance is not free because all of

these technologies are expensive. So, for grad students, that's a challenge, right? It's not

like we're swimming in resources to finance our projects. And so having to pay for

archival records is hard." Other participants were able to request microfilmed records

through interlibrary loan, which were free to use but which required microfilm readers

and equipment that participants did not personally own. Thus, participants were

restricted to viewing these records in the university library. Records requested through

interlibrary loan also came with due dates, which put time constraints on their use.

As one anthropology major pointed out, however, "Without physically going to

the archives, it's really difficult to determine what they have and whether it's going to be

useful. So, unless you have the resources to travel around and go to all these different

archives, it can be hard, as a graduate student especially, to get that information."

Among the participants who had visited archival repositories in person, all had received

some kind of grant, scholarship, and/or fellowship to support their travel and research.

Only one student, however, traveled to an archival repository in the same state as the

university that the participants attended; all other students had to travel at least one state

away to access relevant records in person. The two most senior participants, one in

his/her fifth year of study and one in his/her sixth year of study, had visited more than

four repositories each at the time of their interviews; these repositories were located in

places as far-flung as Washington, DC and Denver, Colorado, and Chicago and New

Mexico. One student was planning a trip to an archival repository in Spain in the coming

months, while another had already visited a Canadian archive the previous year, and a

third was hoping to get funding to travel to France. Even when funding for travel was

available, however, participants lamented that it was never enough to support the amount

of time they needed to delve into relevant records to their satisfaction, or in some cases,

to pursue certain topics of interest:

> "I've been lucky to receive a lot of funding that I'm very appreciative of. That
> said, that funding doesn't allow me to go to a library for a month... So if I don't
> know what I'm coming for and exactly what documents I need to find when I get
> there, that has really been a challenge… [At the Library of Congress,] there were
> some collections that didn't have online finding aids, and so I didn't even look at
> them just 'cause I knew I had a week there, that was all I could afford with the
> grant I had. And I had basically to just shelve those and hope that I can afford to
> go look at them later because I had no way of knowing what I was looking at."
> (Student 4)

> "Honestly, as a grad student, I go where the money is… As a grad student, it
> definitely kind of shaped my research. Eventually, I'll hopefully have a job
> where I have some research funding where I have some more flexibility and can
> go do research in other places." (Student 6)

As another participant put it, "I just wish I could experiment all day and just see where

things might be, but unfortunately when you're a scholar and you're there, you're at an

archives, for a month or maybe six months even, you don't have the time to go down

every rabbit hole." In such cases, participants noted, their best option for maximizing the

time that they had for in-person visits was to learn as much as possible about a

repository's records and plan out the collections that they want to consult in advance.

Discovery and Access Challenges Particular to Native American Archival Research

As participants described the challenges that they faced in identifying and

accessing relevant archival materials for their dissertations, they often characterized those

challenges as frustrating but inevitable parts of researching Native American histories,

cultures, and communities. As one interdisciplinary studies major volunteered when

asked to describe the Federal records used in his/her research:

> "They're very sporadic and all over the place… So, honestly I think one of the
> things about being a Native American researcher or a scholar of Native America
> doing your research, you kind of have to – it's like a puzzle, and you kind of have
> to look at one set of records and see how they complement another one, and then
> sort of put the pieces together. You have to – especially in the twentieth century –
> you really do have to know names, and you have to understand the kinship
> networks of the tribe to be able to look at the record." (Student 2)

At a mere three questions into the interview (and still in the introductory stage), this

participant was already identifying discovery challenges perceived to be unique to Native

studies, including persistent gaps in the historical record that require researchers to

creatively piece together sources to solve, and the need to understand the relationships

between tribes so that relevant records can be found regardless of the descriptors (e.g.

names) used to identify those communities. Even as participants often voluntarily

situated their discussion of discovery and access challenges in the context of Native

studies, they were also specifically asked to distinguish between challenges that they

thought were unique to Native studies and those that they thought were common to

archival research more generally. While participants noted many of the same challenges

in their responses overall, they often differed in whether they perceived the challenges to

be particular to Native studies. These differences tended to reflect participants' level of

experience with archival research and their knowledge, both personal and professional, of other archival researchers working on other topics.

Nearly all participants pointed to the lack of written sources on Native communities as being one of the most significant barriers to discovery when they were conducting archival research. As one history major noted, gaps in the historical record had "been the main hurdle for my dissertation research because the people that I study in the Central Plains really didn't have very many interactions with Europeans maybe compared with other places across the continent. And so, there are just simply fewer written records by Europeans about these people directly." Problems related to a lack of written sources were not, however, confined to colonial-era research. As an interdisciplinary studies major noted when discussing the availability of Federal records documenting twentieth-century Native communities of interest, "There's no rhyme or reason for what particular tribes have [government agency] records. Most of them are pretty scant. And then some have a ton." To compensate for "scant" records that related directly to their communities of interest, participants often turned to non-documentary sources, such as archaeological data, to fill in gaps in their knowledge. Others examined how Native peoples were represented by non-Natives in maps, photographs, and other visual and creative materials to glean indirect knowledge about those communities. As one history major in the fifth year of study described:

> "I've had to use a lot of maps, for example; those have been really valuable sources to kind of understand what the Europeans even know about this region before I start reading the sources that they write about it. And so I started with the people who actually went into the place, but then I found it increasingly helpful to also do basic research on the area surrounding the region that I study to figure out what's going on one step further out, say in the Northern Great Plains…And so aside from doing the essential historical content that will be helpful for the narrative of my dissertation, focusing on the periphery of the region I'm studying

here at [university name omitted] has also created some new leads for my research." (Student 5)

Participants with less experience in archival research, however, often had trouble identifying indirect but relevant information on their communities of interest. In such cases, participants often put off an immediate and in-depth examination of archival sources for relevance in favor of collecting all sources that could possibly relate to their topic:

> "So basically, I've been pulling every single document that is related to [the specific Native community of interest]. The part where it gets a little harder, is when I'm trying to understand, you know, what are – how are the Spaniards talking about this, because that's something that I want to make sure I'm looking at too. So there's a lot of documents where I'm like, I don't know if what I'm looking at is relevant, but the Spaniards are clearly saying something about Native Americans here, and so I should probably get this too." (Student 4)

Regardless of the dearth or volume of records related to their specific topics, all participants were aware of the need to read written sources on Native communities in non-indigenous archives with a critical eye, mindful of historical (and contemporary) biases against Native peoples that those records might reflect. As one participant remarked, "There's not a lot of information, or at least not accurate, relevant information about tribal communities outside of tribal communities." Another participant agreed, saying Native peoples are "a particularly challenging population to do research with because there's been a lot of abuses in research in local communities in the past. So there's a lot of mistrust." Awareness of past and ongoing misrepresentations of Native peoples by academics engendered a personal sense of responsibility among participants to ensure that their representations of Native peoples were authentic and accurate:

> "While this is a dissertation that's probably only going to be read by the five people on my committee, it might form the basis of future scholarship: articles, books, whatever. And if – however I'm representing people, I want to make sure

that it's nuanced and complicated and doesn't just adhere to the, to any sort of stereotyping that has historically been done of Native communities." (Student 1)

"I also think the hardest thing is the responsibility that you feel, an incredible amount of responsibility that you feel writing about Native American peoples because their history's so traumatic, so violent, and there's a lot of historians who've done a lot of damage. So they've not only seen, you know, oppression in history, but also oppression by people writing about that history. So you feel very responsible to write a history that places American Indians at the forefront because it happened in the past." (Student 2)

To balance the perspectives represented in non-indigenous archives, participants therefore sought out additional sources—written and oral—from indigenous archives and descendant communities. All participants indicated their intention to conduct oral histories, interviews, focus groups, or surveys among descendant community members to compensate for a lack of written sources from non-indigenous archives that represented Native perspectives. But participants differed in the level of trust that they placed in oral histories versus written sources from non-indigenous archives. One history major, for example, saw oral histories primarily as a way to "bypass limited source availability" in the written record; although recognizing that both types of sources could reflect their creators' biases, this student ultimately perceived oral histories and written sources from non-indigenous archives to be equally valid in terms of the historical information that they could provide. Other participants, however, gave oral sources more credence than written sources from non-indigenous archives in terms of their accuracy and trustworthiness, given the many stereotypes and misrepresentations of Native peoples that written records in non-indigenous archives have long perpetuated. As an interdisciplinary studies major described, he/she felt the need to "do member checking with that person or with that person's descendants" when encountering negative representations of Native leaders in Federal records. "I'm not talking about painting over

things that are negative in the past that have happened," the student was quick to point

out, "because sometimes these things need to be told. But making sure that they're told

in a way that people can come to terms with and not feel like they're being maligned." In

this student's case, centuries of bias towards Native peoples in written records and non-

indigenous archives meant that researchers had a responsibility to do more than simply

balance Eurocentric perspectives with Native ones. Rather, researchers had the

responsibility to actively challenge persistent and recurring negative portrayals of Native

peoples, and through the use of oral histories in their work, to provide Natives with a

platform for representing themselves in a more positive light.

Only one student (the most senior of participants in his/her sixth year of study)

had yet engaged in oral history interviews. But all participants who described plans to

conduct oral histories noted the critical role that their advisors played in introducing them

to Native community members or putting them in touch with other academics that

worked in and would have contacts with Native communities. Advisors played a less

prominent role in helping participants gain access to written primary sources that

reflected Native perspectives, typically records housed in tribal archives (such as tribal

council meeting minutes); but they were still an important source for providing letters of

recommendation and support. To access tribal records, participants typically had to apply

to tribal authorities for permission to conduct research in the community. This process

usually involved submitting a written application to tribal authorities that described

participants' research topics, tribal records of interest, and plans for publishing and

disseminating their research; participants often compared these applications to the

institutional review board (IRB) applications for conducting human-subjects research at

their university. Occasionally, participants had to be interviewed by tribal research

review committees as well; specific procedures for obtaining tribal approval varied

between communities. While all participants who had conducted documentary research

in tribal communities understood communities' wariness in allowing outsiders to access

and interpret their historical records, the tribal approval process was seen by some as yet

another barrier to easy access. As one interdisciplinary studies major remarked:

> "[The tribal IRB] was unlike any IRB I'd ever done. Because I've done ones with
> [university name omitted], I did one for my Master's. But [the tribe] kind of used
> the IRB process not really – they used it as kind of like a gate to the community,
> of saying, we really like the way that our IRB is set up, and we understand that
> you're not doing human [subjects] research, but we just see it as a way of keeping
> a gate on the community, which is completely understandable given their
> history….So, I drew up what I was doing, what my research questions were, what
> I was planning on publishing, what the final product would look like if I was, you
> know, it was my dissertation and if it was ever going to turn into a book, and then
> the council for the tribe – I had to be sponsored by the cultural office there, and
> then the council heard it and accepted and allowed me to come in and look at [the
> records]. And so it was kind of a process, and it's interesting how they're using
> the IRB in this way. [*Pause*] But I understand why they do it." (Student 2)

This same student, however, noted that another tribe whose records he/she accessed had a

much more "streamlined" IRB, possibly because their community was "very often

researched" and they were "used to" researchers requesting access. Thus, the issue for

this student was not so much that tribal approval was needed for outside researchers to

access tribal records, but that some communities' approval process itself felt overly

burdensome for the type of research that he/she was doing.

Once participants were granted approval from tribal authorities to access records,

they often found that records in tribal archives were not arranged or described at the level

of detail that they had seen in other repositories. Describing his/her experiences with one

tribe's archives, a participant remarked that there was "no sort of organization of the

records. And I remember [staff members] were first just like, I don't even know if you want to go back there. It was a closet with a bunch of stuff in boxes, labeled by year." Another participant likewise lamented the fact that tribal council records in which he/she was interested were simply arranged by year, with hardly any description at all: "I mean, we're talking about hundreds of meetings." But as participants did in other repositories, they sought help from tribal archivists and records managers, if available, when they could not find the records that they needed. As the student quoted above noted, "Talking to people first and sort of figuring out where those temporal hotspots are" helped him/her tackle the hundreds of available tribal council meeting records more efficiently and effectively.

Going through the tribal approval process and accessing records from tribal archives also brought issues of cultural sensitivity to the fore. Cultural sensitivity as defined by most study participants differed from their perceived scholarly responsibility to represent Native peoples truthfully and accurately, or even to balance Eurocentric perspectives with Native ones. Rather, for these students, cultural sensitivity was related to access: they understood that Native communities did not necessarily ascribe to non-indigenous archives' open access policies, but instead considered some information and materials sacred or inappropriate for outsiders (or particularly community groups, like men or women) to view. This understanding led some participants to feel an even greater responsibility to consult with Native communities or individuals about the information that they published in their dissertations, and to defer to the judgment of those communities or individuals on the issue—even when materials that participants thought might be culturally sensitive were housed in non-indigenous archives that reported no

restrictions on materials' access or use. As one participant who was researching Federal

boarding school records said:

> "For me, there's something voyeuristic about me going out and looking at
> somebody else's records, especially since the archives' issues of permission are
> different in every archive. So I might be able to access someone's records
> without them giving permission… But that's still somebody's grandmother or
> great-grandmother. So I don't particularly want to be peering into that family's
> information without that family's permission." (Student 1)

For some participants, issues of cultural sensitivity significantly shaped their

research in terms of the sources that they were able to access and the uses to which they

felt they could put them. As one anthropology major researching Native art noted,

"There's a lot of things in the Field Museum [of Natural History in Chicago's] collection,

they have hundreds of [name of Native community omitted] objects. And so I only ended

up photographing like eight things because the majority of them are not – they're

culturally sensitive objects and would not be appropriate for me to include in my

research." But for most participants, the lack of written sources on Native histories,

cultures, and communities in indigenous and non-indigenous archives was a more

significant factor in shaping their research. In some instances, participants framed this

problem as a challenge particular to Native studies. Both interdisciplinary majors, for

instance, noted the lack of available sources on urban Native communities, particularly in

the Northeast and particularly when those communities had no formal tribal government

structure. As a result, both students were considering modifying the scope of their

dissertations to exclude a consideration of urban and/or Northeast Native communities.

For other participants, however, a lack of written sources on their topics was part and

parcel of doing archival research because records were created for a specific purpose in

their time, which is not necessarily how researchers want to use them today:

"If you're doing anything historical or if you need historical background, you're really limited just because research methods were different back in the day. People were looking at different things. So a lot of the markers we're interested in today just weren't collected." (Student 3)

"Talking about Native Americans wasn't the biggest point of what [record creators] were writing. And so sometimes it's just this little reference here and there, we're not getting full stories. That can be a challenge in particular for those of us doing Native history." (Student 4)

Still other participants noted that a lack of written sources was a common problem for scholars researching underrepresented communities. Students were more likely to identify a lack of written sources as common problem for scholars researching underrepresented communities if they personally knew and had talked to some of these researchers.

"I think [the lack of sources] is, on the one hand, definitely, you know, particularly challenging for people studying Native American history. But I also talk to my colleagues who study other historically – groups that have been historically underrepresented in archives, so like enslaved people in the South or women in the eighteenth century. And they actually, in my conversations with them, I find that they have to do a lot of the kind of hurdle-jumping that I do as a Native American historian." (Student 5)

"I think out of any colonial history, there's that challenge of how old the stuff is that you're looking at, and the issues – I mean, obviously, I have a lot of friends who do modern history, and they talk about the issue, I have so many documents I don't even know where to start looking. On the flip side, those of us who do colonial history, it can be more, I can't find documents. There's just not that much out there because of how much time has passed. But on top of that – it's a challenge, I presume, for all colonial historians, but it's especially a challenge for people whose perspectives are not really included in the archives. And so, of course, I'm sure scholars of colonial women's history can speak to this too, or people doing colonial African American history." (Student 4)

A lack of written sources therefore limited, but did not significantly alter, what most participants felt was possible to do in their dissertations. Student 4, for instance, described the need to read available sources closely for any possible references—even subtle, indirect ones—to the Native community of interest. This reflected Student 2's

description (referenced on page 45) of Native American historical research as a "puzzle," requiring scholars to sort through multiple sources and use subtle references to put together as close to a complete narrative as possible. That being said, however, Student 4 had the advantage of studying a Native community who shared the name of a particular geographic region in Spain's colonial American territory. As many of the colonial-era records Student 4 examined were arranged geographically, this student thus had a convenient and ready-made identifier for accessing potentially relevant records, one that other students interested in other Native communities might not necessarily have.

Despite the frequency with which they mentioned overly generic and even inaccurate descriptions of archival records, most participants did not frame this issue as one exclusive to Native studies, just one that made their particular research more difficult. As one history major put it, archival researchers understand that the level of description varies from "collection to collection or even archives to archives." An anthropology student agreed, saying that "there's not one way that any institution organizes [collection] information," and so researchers should make an effort to learn about the various "systems that are used to categorize archives" on their own. More often when considering challenges particular to Native-related archival research, participants cited access challenges, including the geographic dispersal of records and the need to consult with Native communities to access and/or use many of those records.

Suggestions for Archivists on Ways to Improve Resource Discovery and Access

When asked how archivists could facilitate the discovery of and access to relevant records for their research, participants all expressed a desire for more records to be digitized and made available online. As several participants noted, they are used to doing

online research. "I'm in my late twenties, and I'm used to doing everything digitally, right? That's just how I operate," one participant said. "You know, I go to the computer to find a book!" another participant quipped. "Especially with my generation, we go to the computer first." Others noted how online availability of records would save them money by reducing the need to travel to archives and access records in person. Yet, participants also pointed to the increased access that Native communities would have to archival materials from non-indigenous archives if those materials were digitized and made available online. As one anthropology major working with museum objects and records noted, gaining access to collections and records housed in non-indigenous repositories can be intimidating for average Native community members:

> "One of the important things for me in my research is to work with…descendant communities to give them access to these objects and to these archives. And so oftentimes when you go to apply for access, or when you want to do research, you have to be affiliated with some kind of academic institution to be taken seriously, I think. Or even be allowed permission to enter these spaces. And so, I think accessibility is definitely an issue for non-academic people who are doing research on their own community…I just think that the language that is used in order to get access to these spaces probably makes a lot of people feel that they're unqualified to be there." (Student 6)

Part of this student's dissertation therefore involved photographing objects and digitizing records related to his/her Native community of interest and helping the community's museum to make those images available on their website. This student and another interdisciplinary studies student, however, cautioned about widespread digitization without appropriate consideration of issues of cultural sensitivity. These students stressed the importance of community consultation on digitization projects, so that materials that would not be culturally appropriate to disseminate publicly could be identified and removed from the digitization work tray.

The second most common suggestion from participants was for archivists to update existing finding aids with more specific information related to Native communities. In fact, some participants characterized it as a duty for archivists today to note records relating to Native Americans when they came across them; this would help counterbalance the preference that past archivists have shown to European/white American actors in historical collections. As one history major suggested:

> "For Native American history specifically, I think paying more attention to Native people when they pop up in documents and kind of bearing that out in the finding aids as well. Because like I said earlier, a lot of the finding aids that I use are sometimes decades old too. But they mention everything, every keyword or description, that is relevant to Europeans in the documents, and then they don't mention what Native peoples are involved." (Student 5)

Other participants perceived archivists as having more time to comb through records for references to Natives than researchers who only ever interacted with records for a limited period of time. As an interdisciplinary studies major said, "I think it could be the role of archivists to point to records where they have seen Native American voices where not necessarily a researcher would think…because they spend all day with these records. And they have a little bit more time, not that much more time, to sort of experiment." Participants also suggested that Native peoples be involved in updating collection guides and finding aids, as they would be more likely to look for Native voices in records and have community-specific knowledge that could enhance existing descriptions. "It's one of the arguments for American Indian researchers being in these institutions," an anthropology major pointed out. "To kind of help correct that information."

Participants also wanted to see more online Native-themed lists, catalogs, or aggregators that would help them overcome the challenges of geographic dispersal of relevant records. Some participants imagined websites that would list all of the archives

that housed records related to particular tribes or to particular events in Native history (such as allotment). Such sites would presumably streamline the process of identifying relevant repositories in the initial stages of research. One history major actually found such a site early in the research process that was put together by a scholar in the student's subfield. As the student said, the site "basically has lists of all the archives to look at, all the collections to look at" for researchers specializing in a particular historical era in a particular geographic region. Although the site did not capture the detail of collection-specific finding aids, this student noted that it was a useful resource "because it just gets you to the collections and…it really helps [you decide] where you need to start putting your time when you're just getting going on a project."

While this student was the only participant interviewed who had used any kind of aggregator for dispersed collections in the course of research, several participants cited examples of other aggregators that they had read about in scholarly articles or had heard about from advisors and colleagues. These sites did not include the larger aggregators such as ArchiveGrid or Archive Finder, but sites similar to the two community-organized initiatives, Mapping the Stacks and the Northwest Digital Archives, described above. Students saw these tools as useful for helping researchers identify relevant collections, but also as important ways for non-indigenous archives to share control over Native-related collections with Native communities, and thereby ensure culturally sensitive access policies. For instance, one anthropology major cited the Reciprocal Research Network (RRN) as an example of a successful Native-related aggregator that other repositories should emulate. The RRN is a collaboration between 27 institutions that allows researchers to access hundreds of thousands of photographs and digital images of

cultural items related to First Nations communities of the Northwest Coast and British Columbia via a single online interface (Reciprocal Research Network, 2016). Staff members at participating institutions work with First Nations communities to make sure collections are preserved and made accessible in culturally sensitive ways. As this student described, the RRN has not only been a successful example of a community-driven project that facilitates appropriate access to cultural heritage materials of the past, but one that contributes to Native communities' meaning-making in the present:

> "The interesting thing that came through this project was that there was a comments section that came with every [digitized] object, and so there were people that were getting on this site and saying like, oh, my grandmother, that was like something my grandmother gave me when I was younger, and then [they would] tell a story about it. And so then this community knowledge then becomes part of the archives. And so, building, it's like this kind of collaborative building of the archives that kind of makes the archives not necessarily this space that only exists in the past, but is, you know, changing through this process." (Student 6)

Another student pointed to Mukurtu, a free, open-source web platform that allows indigenous communities to manage access permissions to digital content in culturally appropriate ways (Mukurtu, 2016), as striking an ideal balance between ethical considerations of privacy and sensitivity and the desire to expand online access to historical and cultural resources related to Native communities. As this student remarked, "For me, a lot of this is about communities having the right to state their own terms for records that are about them, which is a whole – it's a different way of understanding consent and consultation in the digital world, and I think we need to start moving in that direction."

Discussion:

In many ways, the research strategies described by the six participants in this study reflect the typical information-seeking behaviors for archival researchers as identified in the scholarly literature. Similar to archival users described by Duff and Johnson (2002), Feeney (1999), Tibbo and Meho (2001), and Sinn and Soares (2014), these six students relied on word-of-mouth, secondary source citations, collection guides and inventories, and personal interactions with archivists to discover relevant materials in dispersed repositories. Much like the students described by Hamburger (2004), all six participants considered themselves to be computer literate and digitally savvy. Few, however, regularly used union catalogs or collection aggregators to identify relevant materials, relying instead on general search engines or specific repositories' websites to find materials online. All cited the convenience of digitized (and searchable) finding aids for helping them identify specific materials of interest in particular collections. Yet all also expressed a desire for more updated, detailed finding aids, as well as original records, to be digitized and made available online.

Participants' experiences additionally support previous studies' conclusions that researchers interested in Native American histories, cultures, and communities face particular discovery and access challenges due to the legacies of colonization. Most participants, for instance, reported overly generic or inconsistent descriptions of Native peoples being used in collection finding aids, with some noting outright errors (such as misspellings) in finding aids as well. These inconsistencies and errors inhibited

participants' identification of relevant materials both online and in person, reflecting the past findings of Miner (2009), Duarte and Belarde-Lewis (2015), and others who have described how the practice of literary warrant; the use of western ontologies; and the employment of non-Native archivists to describe Native-related materials in non-indigenous archives have introduced mistakes and biases into collection descriptions. Participants also reported access challenges particular to Native American archival research, including the extensive geographic dispersal of relevant collections and the need to apply to tribal authorities for access to tribal collections. Although participants understood and accepted these challenges—the former as another unfortunate legacy of colonization (Baker, 1998), and the latter as communities' right to control access to their cultural heritage (Haynes et al., 2016)—they nevertheless hoped that future initiatives, such as community-driven digitization projects, would help them access materials online and thereby avoid the high costs of travel to multiple repositories. In fact, several participants echoed recent calls for non-indigenous archives to collaborate with Native communities to ensure that collection descriptions are more accurate, balanced, and reflective of communities' worldviews, and to ensure that digitization efforts respect communities' notions of sacred and secret knowledge (Joffrion & Fernandez, 2015).

Even as these participants corroborated the findings of many past studies, participants' common characteristics and experiences suggest additional considerations for archivists hoping to support research into Native American histories, cultures, and communities in the future. First and foremost, the six students interviewed for this study represented a variety of academic backgrounds and drew upon a wide range of methodologies for their research. While two were historians—the typical "archival user"

as defined in most user studies (Rhee, 2015)—the other four represented the fields of anthropology and interdisciplinary studies on the graduate level, and the fields of public history, public health, education, and more on the undergraduate level. The diversity of fields represented in even this small sample of doctoral students demonstrates that Native American studies is a diverse and interdisciplinary field, one that attracts scholars from multiple majors who have varying levels of experience with archival research and who seek varying types of information for their research. The implication for archivists is that they cannot assume that their users all have the same baseline of knowledge about archival policies and practices, nor that their users have the same information needs or seek to use archival materials in the same ways. For instance, several students who were in the early stages of their research and who had little prior archival experience as anthropology or interdisciplinary studies majors reported initial confusion at the arrangement of the archival collections that they wanted to consult (e.g. by date or type of material rather than by subject); for students using Federal government records, the distribution of materials across regional facilities made little sense to them as well. These students had to learn, largely through trial and error, the archival concept of provenance and how it would affect the information that they would need in order to find and access relevant records. While these students did eventually learn to "think like an archivist," as one interdisciplinary studies student put it, in order to find relevant records, doing so took away valuable time from their research and writing processes, and in some cases, may have contributed to the amount of time that students were taking to complete their degrees.

It is certainly not a new or revolutionary observation to note that a learning curve exists for new archival researchers. Even so, as more students and scholars from a variety of academic fields incorporate archival research into their work on Native American and other underrepresented communities, it is worth reiterating that archivists need to consider how new researchers' expectations, informed as they might be by a familiarity with library subject classifications or the ease at which sophisticated search engines like Google can find relevant websites with only a minimal number of keywords, shape their preconceptions about discovering and accessing archival materials. Archivists may want to incorporate introductions to archival research on their institutions' websites that will help explain concepts like provenance to new researchers and highlight the types of information that researchers will need to know (dates, file numbers, etc.) before they can find and access Native-related collections; the National Archives' "American Indian Records in the National Archives" series of webpages is a good example, one cited by several students interviewed for this study (National Archives and Records Administration, 2017). As budding researchers from multiple fields become interested in Native studies, archivists may also want to consider expanding outreach efforts to professors and scholars who are not strictly in the history or humanities fields (although preconceptions about archival policies and practices are by no means limited to non-historians). After all, several non-humanities professors asked for student recommendations for this study automatically assumed that no students in their departments were interested in Native studies, despite the fact that several students were; these professors merely suggested contacting the history department instead. Giving presentations in research methods courses for social science students, for instance,

or attending conferences and forums that relate to institutional collecting areas can help archivists expand awareness of archival policies and practices among nontraditional archival users, as well as raise awareness of their collections' value for all kinds of research related to Native communities.

As archival users interested in Native studies diversify in terms of background and experience, archivists must remember that their users will not necessarily have the same information needs or seek to use archival materials in the same ways. None of the participants interviewed for this study, for instance, exemplified what Miller (1986) called "fundamental" use of archival collections, wherein their arguments were solely based on one or a few limited number of sources. On the contrary, even the history majors, who might be the user group most often expected to demonstrate "fundamental" use of archival collections, drew upon a wide range of textual and non-textual materials to support their research. As the students themselves reported, scant written records on Native communities of interest in non-indigenous archives often forced them to seek out collections and materials in multiple repositories across the country. At the same time, however, students were wary of relying overly much on a single series or source from a non-indigenous institution, no matter the collection's extent, lest they perpetuate biases and stereotypes against Native peoples that might be present in such sources.

The implication for archivists in non-indigenous archives is twofold. Within their own institutions, archivists can work to connect related collections more explicitly in finding aids and collection guides so that researchers are aware that these connections exist. In many institutions, such links may already be present in the form of controlled subject headings. As previous studies have revealed and as this study attests, however,

these headings are often inadequate or misleading when it comes to Native-related collections, and may not be useful for Native studies scholars attempting to locate relevant materials; none of the six students interviewed, for instance, reported using linked subject headings to find relevant collections. Efforts to connect related collections might therefore be better put in highlighting distinct but related collections in online blog posts or institutional newsletters, or in providing comments sections for online finding aids so that users can post their own feedback about relevant materials in other collections. Outside of their own institutions, archivists should continue to contribute to and support initiatives that will allow cross-institutional searching or that will otherwise unite intellectually related but physically dispersed collections. With regards to Native-related projects specifically, these efforts might best be conducted on a local or regional level, which can provide a flexible and innovative space where Native communities and non-indigenous archives can share leadership on project development and implementation; the Reciprocal Research Network that one student mentioned is a good example.

Partnerships between Native communities and non-indigenous archives can also form the basis of enhanced description efforts for Native-related collections. As multiple participants in this study pointed out, and as previous studies and projects have shown, community partnerships can be mutually beneficial to the parties involved: Native communities can gain greater access to archival materials that are housed in non-indigenous archives, and non-indigenous archives can draw on community knowledge to revise outdated finding aids and describe materials more accurately and ethically. In these cases, non-indigenous archives will likely face the same tensions as Addonizio and

Case (2015) and Altermatt and Hilton (2012) in wanting to provide specificity and granularity in descriptions while also ensuring broader access for researchers without specialized knowledge of collections' contents; in many cases, they may face tensions between open access policies and issues of cultural sensitivity as well. While archivists and community partners will have to resolve these tensions collaboratively and on a case-by-case basis, a viable option suggested by previous studies for facilitating access for both experienced and novice researchers is to tag finding aids with both community-generated identifiers and controlled-access subject headings (Han, 2012). Although no participants in this study specifically mentioned community tagging as a way to address overly generic or inaccurate collection descriptions, participants certainly recognized the need for updated descriptions and appeared to be open to alternative identifiers and access points. As one student noted, "The question of metadata is going to become so critical" as archival institutions increase digitization efforts. "Who's inputting that data, how much did they understand about the original object, and how accurate was that information that they're drawing on as they digitize anyway?" A similar way to balance open access policies with respect for culturally sensitive knowledge could be to include indigenous knowledge labels within revised finding aids, as in the Local Contexts: Traditional Knowledge Labels project (Christen, 2015). As one student familiar with the Local Contexts project noted, adding traditional knowledge labels to existing finding aids in non-indigenous archives can help educate researchers about community-specific restrictions on the materials and encourage them to "think twice" before violating those restrictions.

In developing enhanced, community-driven description projects, archivists and their community partners may want to prioritize descriptions for collections that document twentieth- and twenty-first-century Native communities. Not only were these collections identified by several participants as more likely to lack adequate description than collections documenting the nineteenth century or colonial eras, they were also identified by participants as prime areas of historical, anthropological, and interdisciplinary research. Participants researching the past hundred years were particularly interested in collections that documented Native communities' relationships with the Federal government. This interest in government/official records is unsurprising given the outsized impact that Federal policies have had on Native communities; it is also in keeping with Miller's observation that social history researchers often find evidence of historically underrepresented communities in census records, committee meeting minutes, administrative correspondence, and other bureaucratic records (Miller, 1986). Most of these records will be housed at state-level institutions and/or within the National Archives system, where initiating and coordinating community-oriented enhanced description projects may be more difficult politically than at universities or other non-government, non-indigenous archives. Yet, as multiple participants expressed dissatisfaction with the accuracy and detail of finding aids at government institutions (in contrast to their general satisfaction with university finding aids), archivists at government repositories should take note and work to build broader public support for enhanced description efforts, whether or not those efforts are initially targeted at or only later evolve to feature Native-related collections.

At the same time, though, collaborative partnerships should also focus on the other side of twentieth- and twenty-first-century Federal-Native relationships: the perspective of tribal governments. Most participants who focused on the past one hundred years intended to use tribal government records, once approved by tribal IRBs, to illuminate the impact that Federal policies have had on Native communities in recent decades. Yet, participants who had already conducted research in tribal archives noted significant differences in the level of arrangement and description that these archives had; some communities' archives were well-preserved and described in detail, while other communities lacked the staff and funding to store records in archivally sound boxes and climates. These experiences point to the ongoing need for archivists to work with Native communities to lobby public officials and sympathetic private donors for more resources for tribal archives, libraries, and museums, many of which are chronically underfunded (ATALM, 2012). These funds should not be dependent on the elimination of tribal IRB processes or on a mandate to provide unequivocal open access to records, but rather given freely in respect of Native communities' ownership and rights of disposition over their governments' records. More grants should be given to tribal archivists and records managers to hold workshops and training sessions, travel to conferences and forums, and participate in continuing education programs as well; that way, these individuals can develop and hone the knowledge, skills, and resources they need to continue caring for their records of their communities. The Institute of Museum and Library Services' (IMLS) Native American Library Services Basic Grant provides one example of such a grant (IMLS, 2016).

Given the degree to which the availability of written sources on Native communities appeared to shape participants' research—and given some participants' outright distrust of written records in non-indigenous archives for accurately and authentically portraying Native communities—non-indigenous institutions should work more closely with Native communities to collect and preserve non-textual materials as well as textual records. Such materials might include oral history interviews, photographs, videos, or other materials that document Native communities in the past and the present. To serve as authentic representations of Native culture and counter persistent stereotypes of Natives, however, these materials should as often as possible be created or conducted by Native community members themselves, and perhaps even maintained in tribal archives rather than non-indigenous ones. Efforts to collect and preserve non-textual materials might focus in particular on underrepresented Native communities in the Northeast and in urban areas, as well as Native communities that are not formally recognized by Federal or state governments, all of which were identified by participants as difficult communities to research given a dearth of available written records on them. If maintained in non-indigenous archives, archivists at those institutions should take care that these materials are collected, preserved, described, and made available in culturally appropriate ways.

Just as knowledge of Native communities is not limited to written records, knowledge of institutional holdings is not limited to collection guides and finding aids. All six participants interviewed, for instance, noted the importance of word-of-mouth in helping them to discover relevant collections in dispersed repositories. In fact, recommendations from students' personal networks of advisors, fellow graduate students,

friends, and colleagues were often identified as a crucial source of information during the initial discovery process and a crucial source of support when students met research challenges. For those students who were far enough along in their research to have identified relevant collections and repositories, they also noted the importance of archivists' intimate knowledge of collection contents for helping them find specific series or records of interest. Archivists' expertise was particularly noted and appreciated at Federal repositories, where finding aids were largely considered out of date and/or too generic to be of use in determining relevance, and at tribal archives, where materials often lacked finding aids at all.

Given the importance of individual expertise to researchers' discovery and access processes, archival repositories that house Native-related collections should invest heavily in documenting institutional knowledge of those collections. Staff already familiar with Native-related collections should be part of enhanced description projects so that they can lend their experience and expertise to description efforts. Institutions should also encourage staff to write articles or blog posts, offer formal and informal presentations, or even participate in internal oral history projects so that their institutional knowledge can be collected, preserved, and passed along to new archivists, researchers, and other interested community members in the future. At the same time, however, institutions should recognize the value of *researchers'* knowledge of Native-related collections, since (contrary to what many participants believed) researchers often work more intimately with specific parts of collections than archivists, who are charged with overseeing and providing access to multiple collections. Institutions might therefore consider hosting online, public forums for scholars who work with Native-related

collections to discuss their research and use of collections. Such forums could function similarly to online aggregators of collection descriptions: whereas aggregators would bring together descriptions of collections from multiple repositories in one virtual space, forums could bring together Native studies scholars from multiple backgrounds and with various levels of research experience to share their strategies for overcoming discovery and access challenges particular to their field. In that way, archivists could help facilitate the scholarly "grapevine" that appears to be so vital to Native studies research, and perhaps in the process solicit user feedback that can inform their own policies and practices.

Conclusion:

This study sought to explore how a specific group of archival users—researchers interested in Native American histories, cultures, and communities—identified and accessed archival materials related to their research projects, given that Native American archival materials are often geographically dispersed and inadequately and inaccurately described. More specifically, this study sought to address three main questions:

1. How do researchers interested in Native American histories and cultures currently find relevant archival collections in dispersed environments?
2. How do these researchers currently compensate for inconsistent and inaccurate descriptions—if they are aware of inconsistencies and inaccuracies at all?
3. What tools and strategies for finding relevant collections would best benefit these researchers, from their points of view?

Interviews with six doctoral candidates who each used archival materials to support their research on Native communities provided insight into these questions. Consistent with past studies of archival users' information-seeking behaviors, these six students primarily relied on word-of-mouth, secondary-source citations, collection guides and inventories, and personal interactions with archivists to discover relevant materials in dispersed repositories. Few relied on existing union catalogs or collection aggregators to identify relevant materials, instead using general search engines or specific repositories' websites to find materials online. Participants were aware of inconsistent and inaccurate descriptions of Native-related collections, which reflect how the practice of literary warrant; the use of western ontologies; and the employment of non-Native archivists to describe Native-related materials in non-indigenous archives have introduced mistakes

and biases into collection descriptions. In fact, nearly all participants commented on the ways in which inconsistent and inaccurate descriptions obscured and impeded their search for relevant materials, which provides further evidence of the negative impacts of colonial ideologies on archival descriptive practices. Most participants compensated for inadequate archival descriptions by altering search terms when searching for materials online and by asking knowledgeable professionals, such as reference archivists at repositories of interest, for suggestions about potentially relevant collections. Participants further reported access challenges particular to Native American archival research, including the extensive geographic dispersal of relevant collections and the need to apply to tribal authorities for access to tribal collections. By going directly to researchers and documenting their experiences in their own words, this study thus expands upon and provides additional support for past studies that have focused on discovery and access challenges for Native-related archival research.

Based on participants' experiences, several recommendations to improve the discoverability of and access to Native American archival collections were made. On an institutional level, archivists can partner with Native communities to ensure that Native-related collections in their holdings are described in more specific, more accurate, and culturally appropriate ways. Archivists can also partner with Native communities to coordinate digitization projects and cross-institutional aggregators that will respect communities' notions of sacred and secret knowledge even as they help more researchers access materials online. On a broader level of archival practice, archivists can recognize the interdisciplinary nature of Native studies and the crucial role that advisors, fellow scholars, and archivists themselves play in helping researchers—especially ones new to

primary-source research—find and access relevant collections. On an even broader level of policy, archivists can advocate for ongoing financial support for tribal libraries, archives, and museums and the professionals that work therein so that communities can develop and maintain their own collections that will reflect their worldviews.

While the recommendations made in this study were specific to the context of Native studies and Native-related archival collections, they have the potential to be tailored and adapted to support archival research into other underrepresented communities as well. For instance, these recommendations might be adapted for researchers interested in collections related to African American communities or LGBTQ communities; future explorations into archival users' information-seeking behaviors will hopefully focus on the particular discovery and access challenges faced by researchers interested in these communities, and suggest new strategies for improving resource discovery and access. Future studies will also hopefully investigate the information-seeking behaviors and strategies of non-academic researchers, who may have different discovery and access challenges than students and academic researchers who benefit from institutional resources and support. Case studies of institutions that have engaged in community partnerships to improve resource discovery and access to collections related to particular cultural communities will also continue to provide important insight for archival practice. Such studies should not only document institutions' successes, however, but their difficulties in implementing community partnerships as well; if archivists can learn from past mistakes in making collections related to particular cultural communities more discoverable and accessible, they can hopefully avoid such mistakes in the future. Overall, archivists should continue to take an active role in ascertaining the

needs of their users and the needs of communities who are documented in their

collections, and work to balance those needs in support of ongoing efforts to decolonize

archival descriptions and practices.

Appendix A: Interview Guide

1. Please describe your academic background, current degree program, and primary research focus.

2. Please describe your level of experience with conducting archival research.

3. How often do you use archival materials related to Native Americans to inform or support your current research topic?

   *For the purposes of this interview, "**archival materials**" refers to primary-source collections of documents, maps, photographs, diaries, newspapers, etc. that are preserved and made available in a repository operated by a government entity, university or college, historical society, non-profit, or other institution.*

   *"**Archival materials related to Native Americans**" refers to archival materials written or created by, for, and/or about the Indigenous peoples of the United States, or about particular communities of Indigenous peoples of the United States.*

4. Please describe the collections, record groups, series, or other archival materials that you have consulted as a part of your current research, and the institutions or repositories that have custody of these materials.

5. How do you locate archival materials related to Native Americans that are housed in different repositories?
   - Which tools, systems, or sources do you find most useful in locating dispersed materials?

6. Have you encountered any obstacles in searching for archival materials related to Native Americans across different repositories?
   - Do you perceive these obstacles to be common to most archival research or more specific to research using archival materials related to Native Americans?

7. How do you compensate for any obstacles encountered in searching for materials across different repositories?

8. How do you decide which archival materials are relevant to your research questions?

9. Have you encountered any obstacles in identifying materials that are relevant to your research questions?
   - Do you perceive these obstacles to be common to most archival research or more specific to research using archival materials related to Native Americans?

10. How do you compensate for any obstacles encountered in identifying materials that are relevant to your research questions?

11. Once you have identified relevant materials, do you access them digitally or physically?

12. Have you encountered any obstacles in accessing relevant materials?
    - Do you perceive these obstacles to be common to most archival research or more specific to research using archival materials related to Native Americans?

13. How do you compensate for any obstacles encountered in accessing relevant materials?

14. How could archivists or other information professionals better facilitate the discovery of archival materials related to your research?

15. How could archivists or other information professionals better facilitate access to archival materials related to your research?

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