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Tribal College Libraries

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Good afternoon and thank you for coming to our presentations. My name is Charles Bernholz and I am from the University of Nebraska at Lincoln. I would like to talk briefly today about the potential of an interaction between the Federal Depository Library Program and the Tribal College libraries in this country. In a few minutes, you will hear directly from the American Indian Higher Education Consortium, and from a Tribal University in South Dakota that was the first tribal college to offer a Master's program on an Indian reservation. Please listen to their dreams and their efforts for these important educational programs for their peoples. I am here solely as a documents librarian who happens to have an interest in the tribes.

As we all know, Chapter 19 of Title 44 of the *US Code* defines many of the processes that we must follow in order to expedite the Depository Program, but today – with reference to the Tribal Colleges – I would like to make a few comments on section 1905, the section for “Distribution to depositories; designation of additional libraries; justification; and authorization for certain designations.” It is the second aspect – the designation of additional libraries – that I wish to pinpoint.

Section 1905 reminds us that materials in the Program are distributed to libraries that have been designated specifically by law and through the efforts of Senators, Representatives, the Resident Commissioner of Puerto Rico, the Mayor of the District of Columbia, and the Governors of Guam, American Samoa, and the Virgin Islands. One of the actual specifically legislated adjustments to this collection of institutions listed in that section of the *US Code* denotes the 1989 designation of the library at the Northern Marianas College as a Federal Depository.

Let us think for a moment about the Northern Mariana Islands in the Pacific Ocean. One hundred twenty thousand acres, or two and a half times the area of the District of Columbia. One hundred twenty-five miles from Guam, 1,500 miles from Tokyo, and more than 8,000 miles from Washington, DC. Inhabited for more than the last 3,500 years. Eighty-six percent of the population speaks another language besides English at home. In comparison to the Northern Marianas College, their Pacific colleagues at the American Samoa Community College, the University of Guam, and the College of Micronesia were all designated as land grant depositories through section 1906 of Chapter 19 of Title 44, while the Governor of Guam designated the Guam Public Library. These four latter institutions are, respectively, a Small Community College; a Medium Academic; a Small Academic; and a Medium Public Library according to the familiar Depository Program Size and Library Type classifications. Currently, the University of Guam selects about 39% of the available items, while the American Samoa Community College takes only 6%. The other two libraries are in the low teens. Northern Marianas College selected 10%, so they too were in the Small Academic class.

Note however that we are talking about a Federal depository library at a college within a total land area of less than 1% of the area of the Navajo Nation, and with only 25% of the Navajo Nation population. Yet their declared mission is quite clear: “The mission of Northern Marianas College shall be to provide the best quality and meaningful post-secondary and adult educational opportunities for the purpose of improving the quality of life for the individual and for the Commonwealth as a whole. The College shall be responsible for providing education in the areas of adult and continuing education, post-secondary and adult vocational education and professional development for the people of the Commonwealth.” These points have been echoed by the mission statement of Dine College, the oldest and largest tribally controlled institution and the first to be accredited as a two-year college. The College wishes to foster “social responsibility, community service and scholarly research that contribute to the social, economic and cultural well being of the Navajo Nation.”

Are not these declarations interesting when we learn also that Haskell Indian Nations University states: “The academic vision of Haskell Indian Nations University is to prepare graduates to assume positions of political, economic, intellectual, artistic and environmental leadership in tribal, regional, national and international contexts. In order to achieve Haskell’s vision of being a national intertribal center for teaching, extension and research, the academic community is committed to assisting tribal constituents in their efforts to address social, cultural, economic, educational, and environmental development for the twenty-first century.” I think you get my drift already.

In my discussions with Chris Bull, the former Director of Libraries at Northern Marianas College, he noted that their 10% item selection rate addressed their local needs. They picked materials on health and family issues; on art; on the Peace Corps; on agricultural publications; the Smithsonian materials; and the general titles on US government. In other words, Northern Marianas College did just as the *Guidelines of the Federal Depository Program* tell us. The Library selected “materials responsive to the needs of the users... where the library is located.” And, to be truthful, he noted the usual problems – low usage; limited enthusiasm; scarce shelf space; and dwindling Library gate counts – that affect all of us and which led, in part, to their withdrawal from the program in 1999.

But it was their focus that especially catches our attention. Their selection of materials on the tropics or semi-tropics reflects their agrarian efforts, and the Peace Corps has been in the western Pacific since the 1960s. Northern Marianas College demonstrated that each member of the Federal Depository Library Program selects materials that help their own respective Congressional Districts or institutions. I opened the selective depository in Farmington, New Mexico in 1997 and I had the responsibility to select the first items. We took 10%, just like the Northern Marianas College did. This library is in the Four Corners area of northwestern New Mexico and our patron base took in parts of Utah, Arizona, and Colorado in addition to New Mexico. I HAD to select the materials from the Indian Health Service, because one-third of my potential patrons were tribal members. I HAD to take materials in Spanish, because of the Hispanic community in the region. I HAD to think about educational items, because – besides the city’s and district’s schools and educational staff – there was a Community College in town that sent students to our library, and there were students from Dine College in Shiprock too. We

all make such selections as part of our responsibilities in the Depository Program, but we know also that the rich diversity of peoples in this country requires special attention and effort too.

Dine College provides an interesting comparison by itself. The 2003-2004 *American Library Directory* indicates that Dine College holds 55,000 volumes. This is 25% more than the reported 44,000 volume holdings of Northern Marianas College. And it is more than the 40,000 at the University of Guam, and the 30,000 at the American Samoa Community College. There are other Tribal College libraries in the same range: Salish Kootenai College in Montana has 46,000 volumes; Haskell Indian Nations University in Kansas holds 45,100, and Southwestern Indian Polytechnic Institute in New Mexico declared 30,000. In other words, there ARE Tribal College libraries in existence today that match the volume holdings of traditionally designated and of specially designated Federal depositories at academic institutions.

As a point of reference, I can report on the two small Tribal Colleges that are in Nebraska. The Nebraska Indian Community College is on the Omaha Indian reservation in Macy, Nebraska. The College has a second campus on the Santee Sioux reservation, and together, the two libraries have about 6,000 volumes to serve a total of about 200 students. They have been in existence since 1972.

A part of the shared Nebraska Indian Community College was converted in 1996 by the Winnebago Tribe in Winnebago, Nebraska to the Little Priest Tribal College, named in honor of the last true war chief of the Winnebago or Ho-Chunk people. Their library contains about 13,000 volumes and supports about 110 students.

The student base of each College is predominantly from within each Nation, but there are additional Indian and white students from outside the community. In its short history, Little Priest has had students from over a dozen other tribes, some as far away as Arizona and Alaska. And just like the other Tribal Colleges, both Nebraska Indian Community College and Little Priest Tribal College are land grant institutions through the *Equity in Educational Land-Grant Status Act* of 1994. We just saw a few moments ago that the American Samoa Community College, the University of Guam, and the College of Micronesia were all designated as land grant depositories through section 1906 of Chapter 19 of Title 44.

Note too that both of these Tribal College libraries serve as the local Public Library in their respective towns. Each facility has secured several computers through grants from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, and these machines allow all patrons to access the Internet.

A more focused examination of the characteristics of the American Samoa Community College, with its 30,000 volumes, shows that it is categorized in the Depository Program Size and Library Type system as a Small Community College. There are 60 other Small Community College-sized Federal depositories in 26 States from Hawaii to Delaware, from Alaska to Florida, from California to New York, and from Michigan to Texas. Clearly, even absent the two small Tribal Colleges in my State, several of the Tribal College libraries are already on the same holdings footing as these five dozen academic institutions with depository status. The Tribal Colleges would be a useful addition to the Program, and electronic access now means that even small libraries in this consortium can be effective parts of the Federal Depository Library Program.

Now, there is additional support for such endeavors by tribal educators. President Bush's July 2002 Executive Order 13270, Tribal Colleges and Universities, wants to "encourage tribal colleges to participate in Federal programs," to emphasize the development of educational opportunities for their communities, and to insure the "preservation and revitalization of tribal languages and cultural traditions." Ann Marie Downes, the President of Little Priest Tribal College in Nebraska, was one of the 14 individuals named to the President's Board of Advisors on Tribal Colleges and Universities that was created as part of this Executive Order.

In total, there are currently 34 tribal colleges in 12 States within the American Indian Higher Education Consortium, whose mission is to support the efforts of these institutions through a focus on solid education and on tribal self-determination. Their hard work and success are revealed through the growth of the Tribal College network – Montana now has 7 colleges, while North and South Dakota have together 9 institutions. In the last twenty years, enrollment has gone up ten times, and a major objective of these programs centers on educating future tribal educators. Many of these colleges are quite well established and very productive – Haskell Indian Nations University was started 120 years ago but the educational focus has changed substantially since then. Haskell's multi-tribal – over 150 tribes are represented – and culturally based programs now highlight the opportunity to learn and prepare for the future, and their curricula are enhanced through Internet access to the catalog at the Kansas City Public Library in Missouri and at the University of Kansas in Lawrence, as well as patron access to the materials at the University of Kansas.

This approach can be understood more clearly when we reconsider the findings of Cheryl Metoyer-Duran's 1992 paper of the perceptions of Tribal College Presidents on the role of the library in their institutions. One shared perceived characteristic was that the library had to serve as a major link between the community and the resources. Between the COMMUNITY and the resources – not just between the college and the resources. Suddenly, grant funding and grant writing for project support; tribal business contact information; and college accreditation were mixed in the same facility. Information literacy was driven to the forefront of tribal needs and one Tribal College President made this quite clear by stating: "Information literacy makes legitimate the idea that seeking information about issues, ideas, or concepts that concern Indians need not come from books alone; the information may come from many different sources."

However, many Tribal Colleges in less populated areas run the risk of being shut out from such resources because of various impediments to Internet access, or because of the geographic distances involved. The Internet obstructions are disappearing but the distance ones are not: these are reasons why we should encourage the Tribal Colleges to become part of the Federal Depository Library Program as its electronic transition evolves and grows.

The Tribal College Librarians Professional Development Institute Web page lists tribally affiliated institutions in Australia, New Zealand, Canada, and the United States. It is clear that there is an interest, and an enthusiasm in librarianship among all of these organizations and I believe that we would agree that government documents are one of the building blocks of a strong collection. But there is more, especially with regard to government documents.

The Canadian Government has recently implemented the Aboriginal Canada Portal on the World Wide Web. As they declare, this resource “is larger in scope than a site, it is a single window to on-line information and services of common interest,” an avenue to “on-line resources, contacts, information, and government programs and services. The portal offers ease of access and navigation to listings of Aboriginal associations, businesses, organizations, bands, communities, groups, news and peoples.” One resource is “A Statistical Profile on the Health of First Nations in Canada,” a product of Health Canada that reports on the current health status and conditions on Canadian reserves.

As another demonstration of the use of government information, we may look again to the Pacific Ocean. Both Australia and New Zealand have land claim tribunals that post Internet pages to expedite the filing of land claims.

Australia has the National Native Title Tribunal, whose mandate is to work “closely with communities across Australia to assist people to resolve native title applications through mediation and make agreements that recognize everyone’s rights and interests in land and waters.” As part of this service, there are Tribunal libraries located in all state and territory land registries.

In New Zealand, the Waitangi Tribunal – named after a treaty signed in 1840 – provides “processes to assist in the overall Treaty claims settlement process in New Zealand.” Its role is “to make recommendations on claims brought by Maori relating to the practical application of the Treaty and to determine whether certain matters are inconsistent with the principles of the Treaty.”

These last two resources are especially strong commitments supported by both of the respective governments and of the aboriginal peoples of Australia and New Zealand, and the materials made available through the Web in this manner are a direct demonstration of the use of government documents by these nations in only one aspect of the administration of their countries.

These two land claim and these health data efforts of Australia, New Zealand, and Canada are – in terms of their mechanics and their contents – excellent models for all of us to consider for our future Federal Government document endeavors.

I believe that we should encourage the Tribal Colleges to join us. An invitation to the 34 tribal colleges in this country, premised upon the Tribal Colleges and Universities Executive Order and upon the ability to designate additional libraries through section 1905 of Title 44 as was done for the Northern Marianas College or through section 1906 for land grant colleges like the American Samoa Community College, the University of Guam, the College of Micronesia, and – for that matter, the University of Nebraska – would enhance the Tribal Colleges’ ability to reach their goals of providing fruitful educational programs to their communities.

Thank you again for your interest.

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Abstract:

Compares American Indian college libraries with depositories in U.S. territories in the Pacific, and argues for their inclusion in the Federal Depository Library Program.

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