This is a preprint of a chapter accepted for publication by Facet Publishing. This extract has been taken from the authors’ original manuscript and has not been edited. The definitive version of this piece may be found in *Narrative Expansions: Interpreting Decolonisation in Academic Libraries*, edited by Jess Crilly & Regina Everitt, 2022, Facet, London and can be purchased from www.facetpubishing.co.uk. The author agrees not to update the preprint or replace it with the published version of the chapter.

**Preface**

**The origins of Narrative Expansions**

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

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

**Voice**

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

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

**Challenges writing the book**

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

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

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

**Our hope for the future**

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

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

**References**

Crilly. J. (2019) Decolonising the library: a theoretical exploration. Spark: UAL Creative Teaching and Learning Journal, Vol 4, Issue 1, pp.6-15

Fanon, F. (1952) *Black Skin, White Masks*, Grove Press.

Leung, S.Y., Lopez-McKnight, J.R. (2021) *Knowledge Justice: Disrupting Library and Information Studies through Critical Race Theory*, The MIT Press.

**Introduction**

**Decolonise or ‘decolonise’?**

**‘**Decolonisation is impossible, but we must make her possible’ Foluke Adebisi

**A contested term**

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

Decolonisation as an intention has clarity. The students at the University of Cape Town in 2015 were intent on decolonising:

For the first time since the anti-apartheid movement, South African students were grabbing international headlines, as they struggled for universal access to an education that did not reproduce the imperial logic their parents’ generation fought to dismantle. (Elliott-Cooper, 2018, 290)

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

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

So are the tensions around the call to ‘decolonise the library/curriculum/university’ more about enactment than purpose? In relation to the library, perhaps it is the implication that decolonisation is a definable, finite and measurable process, like so many processes that constitute the organisation of libraries, the implication that we can start and one day finish this project. The library is a place that privileges practicality (Hudson, 2017; Nicholson and Seale, 2017) and though there is work to be done this is not the familiar project process with measurable timescales and impacts that we are so used to implementing and is about learning and unlearning as well as about activity. Or is the tension around the accuracy and legitimacy of the term ‘decolonisation’ as it relates to the work being done under that banner, which should logically be radical and transformative? Or the need to properly contextualise decolonisation, surely one thing in the historic centres of colonialism, another in the settler nation, and post-colonial/ neo-colonial city.

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

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

‘There is a long and bumbled history of non-Indigenous peoples making moves to alleviate the impacts of colonization. The too-easy adoption of decolonizing discourse (making decolonization a metaphor) is just one part of that history and it taps into pre-existing tropes that get in the way of more meaningful potential alliances. We think of the enactment of these tropes as a series of moves to innocence (Malwhinney, 1998), which problematically attempt to reconcile settler guilt and complicity, and rescue settler futurity’. (Tuck and Yang, 2012, 3)

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

‘We think there is value in complicating the substantive claim made by Tuck and Yang (that decolonisation is exclusively about the repatriation of land to indigenous people) in order to extend and deepen their political warning. …colonisation (and hence decolonising) cannot be reduced to a historically specific and geographically particular articulation of the colonial project, namely settler-colonialism in the Americas.’ (Bhambra et al, 2018, 4)

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

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

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

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

**Decolonising the library**

And yet, though these are powerful and important warnings and critiques of how decolonisation is playing out in universities, there *is* clearly decolonising work being done in libraries, and this could be defined as activity that specifically addresses the multiple impacts on the library and knowledge production that result from imperial histories, and colonialism. These long-lasting impacts of the colonial persist in ‘coloniality’, described by Maldonado-Torres:

‘Thus coloniality survives colonialism. It is maintained alive in books, in the criteria for academic performance, in cultural patterns, in common sense, in the self-image of peoples, in aspirations of self, and in so many other aspects of our modern experience. In a way, as modern subjects we breathe coloniality all the time and everyday.’ (Maldonado-Torres, 2007, 243).

The construction of race as a hierarchical system with Whiteness as the pinnacle is a foundational logic of imperialism that justified some people being treated as less than human.

The Enlightenment was pivotal in the shift into the new age of empire: it provided the universalist, supposedly rational and scientific framework of knowledge that maintained colonial logic. Understanding how the Enlightenment and racism cannot be separated is the first step in truly appreciating that colonial logic still rules the world today. (Andrews, 2021, 2)

Coloniality is evident everywhere in academia, in the persistent Whiteness of institutions, including libraries; in the legacy of Eurocentric collections; the colonial roots of the academic subjects that form collections in libraries; the dominance of English language and of academic publishing centred in Europe and the US, and many other aspects of scholarly communication. It is evident in the undervaluing and absence of indigenous forms of knowledge, in accepted notions of research methodologies, and forms of knowledge. Coloniality is also evident in the persistence of universalist knowledge systems, classification schemes and cataloguing vocabularies, and these legacies are one of the most pressing challenges for libraries, as in the much-cited case of the Library of Congress Subject Heading ‘illegal aliens’ (Dartmouth College, 2019: Fox, 2020)

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

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

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

Several authors have used Critical Race Theory (CRT) which provides both a theoretical framework and tool for activism; CRT is used within education, and also in librarianship. Leung & Lopez-McKnight (2021) have traced its application within LIS and the many ways that CRT can be used to challenge the foundational principles of the profession.

**Contested narratives**

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

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

**Conclusion**

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

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

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

(Jonathon Lear, Radical Hope, Ethics in the Face of Cultural Devastation ) quote from the Pitt Rivers Museum website

**About the book**

The aim of *Narrative Expansions* is to draw together some of the work that has been taking place in libraries as part of the decolonising movement that has swept through higher education in the UK and elsewhere and ask how decolonisation is being interpreted– and enacted – in academic libraries. *Narrative Expansions* is in two parts:  Part 1 describes the contexts that libraries are operating in and the impacts of those contexts through an experiential lens. Part 2 focusses on located practices where the theory and practice of decolonisation intersect and practitioners seek to understand how they can be interpreted and applied. Inevitably these are loose and overlapping categories.

**Part 1: Contexts and Experiences**

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

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

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

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

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

**Part 2: In Practice**

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

Decolonisation is contextual and relates to specific histories and geographies. Ashley Edwards and Rachel Chong (Chapter 8) write from within a settler colonial context, from their personal experience and roles in Canadian university libraries. They explain the significance of the 2015 Truth and Reconciliation Commission and related legislation, and how universities, and their constituent libraries are working on the recommendations of the Commission. They consider what reconciliation means within this context and how the work of the Commission seeks to acknowledge and redress past wrongs. Syokau Mutonga and Angela Okune (Chapter 13) use the concept of progressive librarianship writing about their work with libraries in Nairobi, Kenya, using the redevelopment of the McMillan Library in Nairobi as a case study. They pose the question, in the context of decolonisation, what do we remember and what do we forget? And how do we not simply ‘forget and move on’, but reclaim a radical past?’ Describing the impact of neocolonialism (in the form of Structural Adjustment Programs) on the Kenyan infrastructure, Mutonga and Okune question the risks and long-term impacts of multinational technology corporations mining, controlling, and monetising cultural digital assets.

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

Alexandra Duncan, Viv Eades-Miller and Adam Ramejkisdraw on critical pedagogy and describestudent workshops developed at University of the Arts London, ‘Critical Library Research’, ‘Hack Your Library’ and workshops centred on Wikipedia, where learning spaces are framed as places of active critical inquiry and co-production. The workshops center on critical thinking around library systems of knowledge, and democratisation of information production through empowerment of the student voice.

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

In Chapter 12, Christopher Greenberg, Eve Lacey, Frances Marsh, Clara Panozzo Zenere, and Jenni Skinner describe work taking place in Cambridge University Libraries through theDecolonising Through Critical Librarianship Group. Their case studies focus on the African Studies Library and Scott Polar Research Institute, as well as a discussion of how the library can curate, and make discoverable cartonera materials (a means of democratizing publishing originating in Argentina). Collections and legacy metadata are critically evaluated and enhanced through a decolonising lens.In Chapter 14Ludi Price outlines the history of SOAS University of London from its roots in providing language instruction for colonial administrators, missionaries, and scholars for roles within the British Empire to its present role and reputation as a radical space. Price explains the establishment of the Library Decolonisation Group in this context. This history of the Library means that its special collections, such as missionary archives have unique research potential to understand, assess and critique the colonial past. Historical donations, some undocumented, raise the question of the provenance of materials, and ideas of repatriation and restitution. With the closure of physical spaces due to the pandemic and the reliance on digitised materials, Price asks what stories and voices are lost from collections available in physical format only?

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

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

**Acknowledgement and Thanks**

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

Jess Crilly and Regina Everitt, May 2021

**References**

Adebisi, F. (2019) Why I say ‘Decolonisation is impossible’. Blog post <https://folukeafrica.com/why-i-say-decolonisation-is-impossible/> (accessed 17 May 2021)

Andrews, K. (2012) *The new age of empire: how racism and colonialism still rule the world*. Allen Lane

Appleton, 2019 Do not ‘decolonize’ if you are not decolonizing: progressive language and planning beyond a hollow academic rebranding. *Critical ethnic studies blog*, University of Minnesota Press<http://www.criticalethnicstudiesjournal.org/blog/2019/1/21/do-not-decolonize-if-you-are-not-decolonizing-alternate-language-to-navigate-desires-for-progressive-academia-6y5sg> (accessed 7 April 2021)

Bhambra, G. Gebrial, D and Nisancioglu, K., eds. (2018) *Decolonising the university*, London, Pluto

Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities (CRED) (2021). The report. <https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/974507/20210331_-_CRED_Report_-_FINAL_-_Web_Accessible.pdf> (accessed 17 May 2021)

Dartmouth College (2019) Change the subject, a documentary about labels, libraries, and activism  
<https://www.library.dartmouth.edu/digital/digital-collections/change-the-subject>

Doharty, N. Madriaga, M. and Joseph-Salisbury, R. (2020) The university went to ‘decolonise’ and all they brought back was lousy diversity double-speak! Critical race counter-stories from faculty of colour in ‘decolonial’ times. *Educational Philosophy and Theory*. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00131857.2020.1769601>

Elliott-Cooper, (2018) A. ‘Free, decolonised education’ – a lesson from the South African student struggle. In Arday, J. and Mirza, H.S. (eds) Dismantling race in higher education: racism, whiteness and decolonising the academy, 289 – 296, Palgrave Macmillan

Fox, V. (2020) [SAC20-AC\_report\_SAC-Working-Group-on-Alternatives-to-LCSH-Illegal-aliens.pdf (ala.org)](https://alair.ala.org/bitstream/handle/11213/14582/SAC20-AC_report_SAC-Working-Group-on-Alternatives-to-LCSH-Illegal-aliens.pdf) (accessed 17 May 2020)

Hicks, Dan. (2020) *The Brutish museums: the Benin Bronzes, colonial violence and cultural restitution.* London, Pluto Press

Hudson, David James. (2017), The Whiteness of Practicality. In *Topographies of Whiteness: Mapping Whiteness in Library and Information Studies,* edited by Gina Schlesselman-Tarango, 203-234. Sacramento: Library Juice Press.

Keele University. Manifesto for decolonising the curriculum [Keele decolonising the curriculum network - Keele University](https://www.keele.ac.uk/equalitydiversity/equalityframeworksandactivities/equalityawardsandreports/equalityawards/raceequalitycharter/keeledecolonisingthecurriculumnetwork/#keele-manifesto-for-decolonising-the-curriculum) (accessed 14 May 2021)

Leung, Sofia Y, and Lopez-McKnight, R. (2021) *Knowledge justice: disrupting Library and Information Studies through Critical Race Studies.* MIT

Lorde, Audre (1984) The Master’s Tools Will Never Dismantle the Master’s House. *Sister Outsider: Essays and Speeches.* Ed. Berkeley, CA: Crossing Press. 110-114

Maldonado-Torres, N. (2007) On the coloniality of being: contributions to the development of a concept, *Cultural Studies*, 21(2/3), pp.240–270. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09502380601162548>.

Maldonado-Torres, N. (2016) *Outline of ten theses of coloniality and decoloniality*. Foundation Frantz Fanon. Link (accessed 14 May 2021)

Mignolo, W. (2011) *The darker side of Western modernity*. Duke University Press

Nicholson, K. and Seale, M. (2018) *The politics of theory and the practice of critical librarianship*. Library Juice Press

Pitt Rivers Museum. Radical hope <https://prm.web.ox.ac.uk/radical-hope> (accessed 19 April 2021)

Tuck, E. and Yang, K. (2012) Decolonisation is not a metaphor *Decolonisation: Indigeneity, Education & Society*, vol 1, no1, pp1-40

University of Aberdeen. University to return Benin Bronze. <https://www.abdn.ac.uk/news/14790/> (accessed 19 April 2021)