

## Narrative Expansions: Interpreting Decolonisation in Academic Libraries, by Jess Crilly and Regina Everitt

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## Book Review: *Narrative Expansions: Interpreting Decolonisation in Academic Libraries*

Crilly, Jess, and Regina Everitt. *Narrative Expansions: Interpreting Decolonisation in Academic Libraries*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2022, 224pp, \$78.99.

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*Narrative Expansions: Interpreting Decolonisation in Academic Libraries* is divided into two parts. The first section considers contexts and experiences; the second focuses on practice. Each chapter tackles different decolonization strategies; collection development, digitization, space, reading lists, and cataloguing, to name a few. As the book covers a variety of geographies, including Canada, the UK, Africa, and India, contextual information is given in spades.

With a range of authors, this book offers diversity in both voice and content. The book amplifies the voices of a variety of professionals: liaison librarians, collection librarians, lecturers and professors, positions related to EDI, curators, and many more. This highlights that decolonization is a collaborative effort about being in conversation with others, whether that be other libraries or librarians within your library. Furthermore, this variety gives a much-needed grasp on the concept and how different it is enacted throughout the profession. Authors do not always agree with one another, giving the book a hidden strength. The book not only touches on practical ways to decolonize academic libraries but also on the theoretical application of whether decolonization is even possible. Even if we managed to completely decolonize the academic library, it would still exist within a colonial institution with a colonial funding structure. However, the book is not all bleak, as it puts forward an implicit argument that decolonization is a process that will never be completely finished.

Several chapters stand out. Chapter six gives us a crash course on US history, from Jim Crow laws and civil rights to Trumpism and the pandemic. The author reflects on



the structural oppressive history of academic libraries (75), as well as opportunities for justice in librarianship (73). Critical information literacy requires librarians to examine the information system and address how it mirrors society that has an asymmetrical distribution of power (77). Unlike the latter section of the book, this chapter calls for more discussion and theoretical research rather than innovation in praxis.

Chapter eight, on the other hand, focuses on Indigenous librarianship in Canada, showing two perspectives on decolonization attempts at academic institutions in British Columbia. The most informative part was the clear distinction between decolonizing, indigenizing, and reconciliation because they are related terms but not synonyms (110). According to Tuck and Yang, decolonization refers to giving the physical land back. Indigenizing is adopting an Indigenous worldview, through the likes of collection development or hiring Indigenous staff. Finally, reconciliation focuses on the relationship between Indigenous Peoples and Canada, which according to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) requires an awareness of the past, acknowledgement of the harm that has been inflicted, atonement for the causes, and action to change the behaviour. The authors examine barriers to Ph.D.'s, and the lack of Indigenous students in their MLIS cohorts, and what they are working on now (120-121).

Another chapter worthy of note is chapter 15, which focuses on the London School of Economics and Political Sciences. This chapter focuses on collection development policies. While the topic may appear rather straightforward, the chapter was an unexpected highlight. Initiatives like collection development policies may not appear important to outsiders; however, without a policy or strategy, there can be an inconsistent practice that cannot battle the mountain of bias from within and outside the library. The collections librarian can help decolonize the library collection in several ways: by creating a policy that commits to EDI, seeking out new publishers, and creating a nuanced retention policy so items outside the global north are kept (236-242). Overall, this was the most practical chapter in the book with its list of steps and case study notes.

Overall, the book was written with an international audience in mind, giving details like the difference between BAME (Black, Asian, Minority Ethnic) in the UK and BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, Person of Colour) in Canada and the US. Throughout the book, strategically placed information boxes give definitions or more details on a topic. For instance, in chapter eight, *Box 8.1 The Indigenous Peoples in Canada* explains the difference between Canada's First Nations, Inuit, and Metis. That being said, the book is written in a combination of conversational and academic tones, making some chapters easier to digest while others drown in citations. I recommend reading this

book in its entirety to experience the decolonization debate. As the book focuses on decolonizing academic libraries, it is an ideal purchase for libraries of this type. It offers a wealth of international knowledge and perspectives, as well as, case studies that may spark your own institution's decolonization plan.