

**Title of the Satellite Meeting:** SET Training School: Towards a Curriculum for Social and Digital Inclusion and Lifelong Learning

**Date:** 29-30 July 2022

**Location:** University College Dublin

## **LIS research methodology: decolonial perspectives informing knowledge of African communities**

**Jaya Raju**

Department of Knowledge and Information Stewardship, Humanities Faculty, University of Cape Town, Cape Town, South Africa.

jaya.raju@uct.ac.za



Copyright © 2022 by Jaya Raju. This work is made available under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License:

<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0>

---

### **Abstract:**

*'Information' as conceptualized in the discipline of library and information science (LIS) is not neutral as LIS increasingly, in the current digital information age and within a reflective and epistemological framework, critically engages historical, cultural, social, economic, and political forces that interact with information. Such forces may use information to advance dominant epistemic agendas and hence the need for LIS researchers, students, practitioners, and other relevant stakeholders to critically interrogate and even disrupt such forces in their curation of information for use in research, practice, theory development, policy application, and so on. It is in such a transformative context that the proposed presentation interrogates LIS research methodology, contextualized in African decolonial space, as a heuristic tool in LIS curricula for a more informed understanding of communities in Africa served by library and information services. Existing LIS research methodology literature, as little as there is, tend to emanate from the global north and reflect western research epistemology; and do not address decolonial approaches and methods to critically engage traditional scholarship and dominant western knowledge systems in LIS research. Hence the purpose of this presentation/paper is to address the broader philosophical, ontological, and epistemological issues that inform the research process, but specifically capturing African decolonial perspectives.*

**Keywords:** Decolonization, research methodology, LIS education, Africa

---

**Put body of the paper here (please note that this is not a full paper but an extended abstract)**

‘Information’ as conceptualized in the discipline of library and information science (LIS) is not neutral as LIS increasingly, in the current digital information age and within a reflective and epistemological framework, critically engages historical, cultural, social, economic, and political forces that interact with information. Such forces may use information to advance dominant epistemic agendas and hence the need for LIS researchers, students, practitioners, and other relevant stakeholders to critically interrogate and even disrupt such forces in their curation of information for use in research, practice, theory development, policy application, and so on. It is in such a transformative context that this paper interrogates LIS research methodology, contextualized in African decolonial space, as a heuristic tool in LIS curricula for a more informed understanding of communities in Africa served by library and information services. Existing LIS research methodology literature (for example, Beck & Manuel, 2008; Pickard, 2013; Connaway & Radford, 2017), as little as there is, tend to emanate from the global north and reflect western research epistemology; and do not address decolonial approaches and methods to critically engage traditional scholarship and dominant western knowledge systems in LIS research. Hence the purpose of this paper is to address the broader philosophical, ontological, and epistemological issues that inform the research process, but specifically capturing African decolonial perspectives. The paper is informed by decolonial theoretical perspectives which refer to a broad body of intellectual work articulating rejection of the privileging, in scholarly pursuits, of dominant western knowledge systems and intellectual traditions and the advancing of decolonization, indigenization and a recognition of multiple ways of knowing in research and knowledge production (Smith, 1999; Chilisa 2012; Zavala, 2013; Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2019).

Conceptual framing of the paper is informed firstly by the seminal works of Smith (1999) and Chilisa (2012) on decolonizing research methodologies and, secondly, by a critical review of global literature on decolonizing research methodology in the context of indigenous and other marginalized communities. The paper uses concept mapping (Babbie 2021) to capture in table and graphic format, relevant decolonization constructs that can be mapped to the philosophical, ontological and epistemological aspects that inform the research process in LIS research. According to Babbie (2021) qualitative extraction of data can be captured as relationships among concepts in a graphic format. The concept mapping outcome is intentioned to be used

as a heuristic tool in LIS education and research to enable community-sensitive and impactful research relevant to indigenous and other marginalized communities, such as those in Africa as well as in other global contexts.

### **Acknowledgments**

N/A

### **References**

- Babbie, E. 2021. *The practice of social research*. 15<sup>th</sup> ed. Boston, MA: Centage Learning
- Beck, S.E. & Manuel, K. 2008. *Practical research methods for librarians and information professionals*. New York: Neal-Schuman
- Chilisa, B. 2012. *Indigenous research methodologies*. Los Angeles: Sage
- Connaway, L.S. & Radford, M.L. 2017. *Research methods for library and information science*. 6<sup>th</sup> ed. Santa Barbara, Calif.: Libraries Unlimited
- Ndlovu-Gatsheni, S.J. 2019. Provisional notes on decolonizing research methodologies and undoing its dirty history. *Journal of Developing Societies*, 35(4): 481-492
- Pickard, A.J. 2013. *Richard methods in information*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Chicago: Neal-Schuman
- Smith, L.T. 1999. *Decolonizing methodologies: research and indigenous peoples*. London: Zed Books.
- Zavala, M. 2013. What do we mean by decolonizing research strategies?: lessons from decolonizing, indigenous research projects in New Zealand and Latin America. *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society*, 2(1): 55-71