

Moving Beyond Diversity to Social Justice

A Call to Action for Academic Libraries

The academic library is the common thread among all campus constituents. Open to students, faculty, staff, and community members, the academic library offers services and resources that are accessible to all. With such extensive scope, the academic library can be a major influence on knowledge construction in the higher education environment. Diversity and social justice are championed in foundational documents of the profession prompting libraries to promote uncensored access of information to all. Specifically, academic libraries have carried out this mission by promoting information literacy, providing free access to scholarly materials for faculty and student research, hosting engagement opportunities for the campus and community, and serving as a gathering place for independent and collaborative learning. Indeed, these efforts can pay off as correlations have been found between academic library offerings and perceptions of increased positive campus climate (Ciszek, 2011).

Often, however, libraries choose to express the commitment to diversity and social justice through diversity initiatives that are too simplistic to achieve true social justice ideals. By more intentionally incorporating social justice frameworks into common library functions such as information literacy education, research services, access to scholarly material, and physical spaces for scholarly activity and engagement, the academic library can do important work in achieving true social justice goals. However, the academic library often

■ Katy Mathuews is the Collections Assessment and Stacks Management Librarian at Ohio University's Alden Library and a doctoral student in Higher Education Administration at Ohio University. Her research interests include social justice issues in higher education and academic libraries' contribution to student success.

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fails to realize its own potential for the advancement of social justice on college campuses. Further, the academic library is often overlooked as a key player in social justice initiatives on campus. By communicating and working toward true social justice goals, the library can show meaningful value to campus constituents. Through intentional partnerships with areas such as institutional effectiveness, residence life, student affairs, and other organizations, the impact of social justice acts can be magnified (Oakleaf, 2010).

This article examines the common challenges faced among academic libraries and higher education institutions. The article will explore the nuanced difference between diversity and social justice and how academic libraries can draw upon the profession's social justice foundations to move beyond simple diversity initiatives to a more authentic social justice agenda, recognizing the library's role in knowledge construction. As such, this paper focuses on the social justice agenda within academic libraries. It is beyond the scope of this article to address library neutrality and the role of the academic library as advocate. For further examinations of library neutrality and the role of the library as social advocate, the author recommends the works of Lewis (2008) and Samek (2007).

Challenges in Higher Education

As a constituent of a larger organization, academic libraries share many of the challenges faced by their host institutions including constrained funding, an increasingly diverse student body, and campus climate issues. These challenges make it important for libraries to not only prove their value, but also to collaborate with campus partners to capitalize on shared resources and talents. It is also essential to consider the social justice implications of these challenges.

Changing Funding Models

Higher education institutions face increasing pressure from external bodies such as state governments and accrediting agencies. These pressures are also felt in academic libraries. Changing funding models are a common challenge faced by colleges and universities. In Ohio, for example, the basis of state government funding has moved from enrollments to performance-based measures like course completion and graduation rates. This move has subtle social justice implications that have shifted the focus of the university mission from one of access to one that incentivizes student success (Miao, 2012).

Many institutions, particularly open-access institutions, find this funding shift challenging. Open-access institutions often enroll a high number of students who are not college ready. Supporting students who are not college ready often

requires extensive resources, including academically vibrant library services and extensive library resources. Often when institutions move from enrollment-based funding to performance-based funding, budget challenges arise, resulting in steep budget cuts. These budget cuts impact the academic library through reduced staffing and reduced resources, which negatively impact support to students. Thus, open-access institutions strive to maintain their access mission with increasingly limited resources to support the very student success upon which their funding is based (Tinto, 2008).

Shawnee State University, an open-access institution in Appalachian Ohio, was particularly affected by Ohio's switch to performance-based funding in recent years. Shawnee State University has implemented budget cuts that have impacted the level of service offered to students. With a majority of first-generation, nontraditional, and academically at-risk students, the financial challenges have been particularly difficult. Shawnee State University has faced several years of budget cuts stemming primarily from decreased enrollments and the move to performance-based funding (Allen, 2013). The cuts have led to decreased library services and staffing, including the planned vacancy of up to 50% of professional librarian positions, despite the library being recognized as a mission-critical partner (Budget, 2015).

Given the budget challenges and unique mission of Shawnee State University, government directives have formalized a series of commitments to improve student completion rates (Chancellor, 2011; Completion, 2014). These commitments focus on increasing student success as measured by course completions and graduation rates, but do not provide the necessary funding to achieve such goals. Setting challenging goals with limited resources necessitates cross-campus collaboration to maintain quality service to students in an institution driven by an access mission. The academic library can be a valuable partner in the effort to increase student success in a limited budget environment.

Changing Student Demographics

Student populations at higher education institutions are becoming more diverse. According to data from the National Center for Education Statistics, student populations on college campuses are welcoming a higher number of female students and students of all racial/ethnic backgrounds. In 1976, female students made up 47.2% of enrollments in U.S. institutions. This figure grew to 57% in 2014. The percentage of White enrollments has declined from 84.3% in 1976 to 59.3% in 2013. This trend was accompanied by an increase in diverse racial groups. In the same time period Black enrollments increased from 9.6% to 14.7%; Hispanic enrollments increased from 3.6% to 15.8%; Asian/Pacific Islander enrollments increased from 2.4% to 6.4%; and American Indian/

Alaska Native enrollments increased from 0.7 to 0.8%. This is in addition to students identifying two or more races making up 2.9% of enrollments. The increase in racial diversity parallels the increase of foreign students who are enrolled in institutions in the United States who numbered 311,880 in 1980-81 and increased to 885,052 in 2013-14 (NCES, 2013).

These measures of increasing diversity do not take into consideration the multiple other factors of diversity that are more difficult to recognize and measure. These factors include students' sexual orientation, unseen physical challenges, and mental health issues, among others. This growing diversity on college campuses amplifies the need to incorporate social justice frameworks into practice to better support a diverse student population. Academic libraries can help fill the need to provide social justice frameworks as a provider of diverse resources, inclusive services, and a safe space for study, research, and programming.

Increased Campus Climate Issues

Institutions of higher education have faced many campus climate challenges in recent years. Mishandled sexual assault cases have made headlines from Columbia University (Smith, 2014) to the legacy of sexual assault at the University of Virginia (Kelderman & Koenig, 2014; Seccuro, 2011). Systematic sexualization and racism have also made headlines as the Ohio State University Marching Band addressed allegations of a sexualized culture and a racist fraternity chant was exposed at the University of Oklahoma (Schmidt, 2015; Thomason, 2015). These examples highlight that institutions of higher education are not doing enough to address campus climate issues.

Some institutions and student groups have responded to charged campus climate issues on their campuses, demonstrating a willingness to address social justice issues. An institutional campaign at the University of Michigan encourages the campus community to use inclusive language (Jenkins, 2014) and a student campaign on racially appropriate conversation and representation of diversity at Harvard (Bean, 2014; Harvard, 2014) demonstrate that administrators and students alike are beginning to confront social justice issues. In fact, in a study of the classroom climate in higher education, Boysen (2012) found that students expect faculty to confront social justice issues in the classroom. Academic libraries can carry this important work of addressing campus climate issues forward to help provide students with a safe and inclusive campus environment. Academic libraries can provide resources to faculty and staff to raise awareness of social justice issues and how to effectively address the structures of higher education to ensure inclusiveness. The academic library can also critically analyze the library structure to ensure social justice concerns are addressed.

Social Justice Frameworks

Library staff can address the challenges of increasing diversity and intensified campus climate issues by incorporating social justice frameworks into everyday practice. Though social justice frameworks targeted specifically at libraries are scarce in the literature, many scholars have written with the higher education audience in mind. This article will explore several major social justice frameworks with the intent to provide a frame of reference for practitioners to weave theory into practice.

Diversity vs. Social Justice

Diversity is a common theme in academic libraries. However, it is important to distinguish between diversity and social justice. When we seek to address diversity, we are really addressing the varied characteristics that are represented in groups (Morales, Knowles, & Bourg, 2014). An example of this is ensuring that a library display of poetry includes authors from various racial and cultural backgrounds.

While ensuring diversity is a valuable action, social justice takes this line of thinking beyond simple representation to a more complex view of systems. Social justice seeks to ensure that all people participate in and benefit equally from a system. Following this line of thinking, social justice is inclusive of diversity. Social justice can ensure that power and privilege are addressed at the micro and macro level (Morales et al., 2014). Thus, while diversity initiatives in libraries are commendable and important, it is now necessary to incorporate social justice frameworks into library structures. An evolution of social justice thinking is presented below.

Foundational Social Justice Frameworks

John Rawls (1999) approaches social justice from a distributive fairness perspective. Rawls focuses on ownership of goods, which can be both tangible and intangible. Rawls stresses the importance of fairness over the privileging of any specific characteristic and supports value-free decision making. Rawls proposes operating under the mindset of the “original position (Rawls, p 11),” an approach in which one is placed behind a “veil of ignorance (Rawls, p12),” in which knowledge of any privileging characteristics is unseen. Specifically, Rawls contended that distribution of primary goods should be equally distributed, regardless of social standing. Rawls accepted inequalities when they benefit those least well off (Wilson-Strydom, 2015).

Critiquing Rawls, Young (1990) contends that using a distributive approach is too simplistic in that it ignores the very structures that bring about inequality

of distribution. To focus on distribution implies that there is a simple solution to social justice concerns. Young (1990) contends that we should focus on the process of distribution, not the end result. Young draws attention to the complex and contextual aspects of social justice challenges, focusing particularly on oppression and domination of groups. Young contends that structures often privilege certain groups and we should strive to reconstruct these systems by allowing various groups to be involved in decision-making processes (Wilson-Strydom, 2015).

The idea of focusing on structure is also championed by Fraser (1996, 1997, 2009), who calls for parity of participation. Acknowledging the distributive approach, Fraser notes that resources must be distributed such that all people can interact as equal contributors, each with an equal voice. Fraser acknowledges the importance of distributive fairness as an equalizing mechanism of participation, but echoes Young by asserting that the system must be the object of critique. Fraser also calls for systematic mechanisms for respect and equal opportunity (Wilson-Strydom, 2015).

The New Social Justice Approach in Higher Education

Nussbaum (2000, 2011) and Sen (1985, 1999) take the work of Young and Fraser a step further by focusing on the ability and opportunity individuals have to achieve their desired state. This capabilities approach begins to view success not just in equal outcomes, but equal opportunity. In education, this could mean ensuring that blind students have access to Braille textbooks or visual equipment to ensure they are equally capable of reading course materials as sighted students. This approach requires understanding diverse student needs and the necessary factors to support students to achieve success (Wilson-Strydom, 2015).

Davis and Harrison (2013) offer a balanced approach to social justice. Davis and Harrison advocate social justice as a “means as well as an end” (p. xix). Davis and Harrison also acknowledge the complexity of diverse interactions involving emotion. Davis and Harrison target structures that perpetuate social injustice. Citing examples of how the educational system failed to produce a student who was able to instill critical thought and racial sensitivity, Davis and Harrison look past superficial solutions to pinpoint the problematic foundation of an issue.

Essential to the idea of parity of participation, Davis and Harrison offer the idea that we must be willing to accept that our truth is not a universal truth. When we acknowledge the lens through which we view the world, we can participate in honest conversations that lead to meaningful change and holistic solutions to social justice challenges. Similar to Sen (1985, 1999) and Nussbaum (2000, 2011), Davis and Harrison cite postpositivist thinking as a means to unpack

how our knowledge is constructed in an effort to dissect the often unseen social justice implications of our practice. This balanced approach aligns well with the foundational ideals of the library profession.

Academic Libraries as Social Justice Partners

For the past seventy years, American higher education has become increasingly diverse. The increased diversity was enhanced by several legislative actions including the G.I. Bill, the Economic Opportunity Act of 1964, and the 1965 Higher Education Act. The diversification of the student population was accompanied by a demand for more diverse courses of study, with practical studies accompanying the liberal arts (Geiger, 2015).

Academic libraries have supported the growing diversity in student population and curriculum by amassing collections, providing services, and creating programming that supported all subject areas. The student affairs field also grew to support the new face of higher education. Student affairs activities that revolved around enrollment management, residence life, student programming and academic advising proliferated. Amidst the growth of student affairs services, the value of academic libraries to support diversity and social justice was virtually unnoticed as higher education adapted to support the growing diversity in higher education (Wellburn, 2010). Even today, the understanding of how libraries can contribute to social justice on campus and the important collaborations that could stem from such an understanding are largely unrecognized beyond, and even within, the library walls. In an effort for the library profession to recognize its value as a social justice partner and communicate this value to campus partners, it is important to recognize the foundational commitments and characteristics that enable libraries to be important campus partners in social justice. Summaries of the major foundational statements of the American Library Association are presented below.

ALA Library Bill of Rights

The *Library Bill of Rights* was established by the American Library Association (ALA) in 1939. Since then, it has been amended and reaffirmed six times, most recently in 1996. This document sets social justice missions at the core of librarianship. The document outlines six policies that should guide library practice. It is evident that these themes align with social justice frameworks.

The first policy establishes that library resources should be accessible to all people. Additionally, library resources should not be “excluded because of the origin, background, or views of those contributing to their creation” (Bill, 1996, para. 1). This policy is extended to discourage the selection or exclusion

of materials based on “partisan or doctrinal disapproval” (Bill, 1996, para. 2). Instead, libraries should include all views in their collections, ensuring representation of current and historical points of view. To this aim, libraries will not tolerate censorship. In fact, libraries will protect the right to intellectual freedom and freedom of expression for all people regardless of “origin, age, background, or views” (Bill, 1996, para. 1). Likewise, the library extends its physical space in an equitable manner (American Library Association, 1996).

With such a solid foundation in free access, equitable representation of resources, and inclusivity of all, it is readily apparent that libraries are obvious social justice partners. The inclusiveness described in this document speaks to the commitment to ensure all views are represented to work toward a balanced construction of knowledge. The *Library Bill of Rights* establishes these policies before all else, intending this document to inform the development of library services and collections. This document can be considered one of the first and essential social justice documents in librarianship.

ALA Code of Ethics

The American Library Association furthered the commitment to social justice with the publication in 1939 of the *Code of Ethics* of the American Library Association. This document has been amended three times since the original publication, most recently in 2008. In this document, ALA recognized that “ethical dilemmas occur when values are in conflict” (Code, 2008, para. 2). The eight principles outlined in the document seek to inform the management of ethical dilemmas. The fact that ALA published this document in addition to the *Library Bill of Rights* demonstrates the early and enduring commitment to social justice (Code, 2008).

The *Code of Ethics* reiterates the commitment to equitable service and access to a collection that is uncensored and inclusive of all viewpoints, again echoing a commitment to balanced knowledge construction. The *Code of Ethics* also calls for “courteous responses to all requests” (Code, 2008, para. 5). The *Code of Ethics* further explains that the library will protect the confidentiality and privacy of a library user. The library should not release information about the information sought, checkout history, or any other use information about the patron to any third party. This allows the patron a sense of security and safety to access any information deemed useful to them without shame, embarrassment, or any other challenge. Libraries further should not let personal convictions interfere with fair and equal treatment of library functions (Code, 2008).

The *Code of Ethics* further states that library staff will treat coworkers with “respect, fairness, and good faith, and advocate conditions of employment that safeguard the rights and welfare of all employees of our institutions” (Code, 2008, para. 5). This principle is essential for fostering a social justice climate

in which diverse ideas can be discussed and inclusive decisions made. A work environment that fosters this type of respect, in turn, benefits service to patrons. Additionally, professional development is encouraged to sustain an environment that is able to meet changing needs in an equitable way (Code, 2008).

It is evident from this document that the library profession is one that fiercely protects an individual's right to access any information he or she deems necessary. This right is further protected by an intolerance for censorship of materials. These commitments safeguard the inclusive construction of knowledge in the academy. These foundational documents demonstrate the profession's commitment to incorporate social justice frameworks into practice.

ACRL Diversity Standards

To further strengthen the commitment to diversity and social justice, the Association of College and Research Libraries division of ALA published their *Diversity Standards* in 2012.

The goal of this document is to develop cultural competencies, outlining eleven standards for diversity in academic libraries. This document offers interpretations of the standards to aid application. This document begins to move closer to a true social justice framework in that it considers acknowledging our truths, knowledge of and respect for diversity, and a look at the structure of academic services (Standards, 2012).

The *Diversity Standards* advocate a “cultural awareness of self and others” and “cross-cultural knowledge and skills” (Standards, 2012, st. 1). As Davis and Harrison (2013) advocate, this calls for library workers to examine their personal truths to increase awareness of how our views of the world may be biased and may affect decision making. This involves examining any predisposed beliefs one may have, even if it is uncomfortable, to insure that those beliefs do not prevent the library worker from achieving the inclusive goals of librarianship. It is also essential to understand when membership in a privileged group may influence a situation and unknowingly affect others. It is then essential to acknowledge and respect the truths of others. The standards encourage library staff to become educated in the cultural beliefs and communication norms for diverse populations to better connect with patrons and provide needed services (Standards, 2012).

The *Diversity Standards* go on to outline cultural competencies for services and collections of the library. These standards speak to the establishment of professional values that guide culturally competent professional behavior both individually and as an organization. Following the *Diversity Standards*, librarians must be diligent in examining collections and services to be sure no group is excluded and that services respect cultural needs and differences. Libraries should build programs and services to meet unique cultural needs.

Monitoring demographic trends helps librarians to anticipate community needs. In developing services such as instruction, librarians are encouraged to address the audience in culturally competent ways, such as developing an awareness of language barriers inherent in library services (Standards, 2012).

The *Diversity Standards* (2012) also encourage developing cultural competence among library staff. This can be achieved through ensuring that diversity is reflected in library staff. When diverse perspectives are included in library planning, patron needs are better able to be met. The organization should foster an environment that encourages the learning and development of cultural competence that is sustainable. This can be bolstered by developing leadership and mission documents that encourage diversity and promote cultural competence.

As demonstrated through the *Library Bill of Rights*, the *Code of Ethics*, and the *Diversity Standards*, libraries are at their core social justice advocates. The driving mission of libraries is to provide uncensored access to an inclusive set of resources and services to all people. It is thus essential for libraries to apply these social justice commitments to practice. We will identify how libraries have incorporated these values so far and how libraries can successfully incorporate these ideals into future initiatives.

Traditional Approaches to Diversity in Academic Libraries

It is not contested that libraries have harnessed the profession's proclivity for inclusiveness to extend to renewed goals for diversity in libraries. Indeed, diversity is a common buzzword in the library profession. Many necessary initiatives have proliferated to achieve the goal of diversity in libraries. These activities do important work to expand the connection and engagement of marginalized groups on campus.

As the profession continues to move diversity to social justice, these activities are to be honored for paving the way for deeper social justice work. Early in diversity initiatives, libraries often focus traditional approaches to specific groups, ensuring diverse representation and training in the workforce, and targeted library displays and events.

Service to Specific Groups

An initial response to incorporating diversity initiatives into practice is to design specialized services for targeted groups. This often manifests in the creation of a display of library materials that highlight a cultural topic of the targeted group or highlight authors who are members of the targeted group. Cultural events and celebrations attached to recognized days or months are often common.

The African American community as often represented in diversity work. At the Ernest J. Gaines Center, the University of Louisiana has created a safe environment to promote awareness and prompt discussion surrounding diversity. The Gaines Center hosts speakers and film screenings on topics such as slavery in tourism in Ghana. The Center feels that these types of conversations expand the vocabulary of our world and expose people to new perspectives from which they can examine their world. Taking this approach a step further, the Center has also screened well-known films such as *The Color Purple*. This type of event draws people in due to the popularity of the film, then provides a vehicle to discuss the issues that these films bring to light.

The LGBT community is also often a population that receives targeted services. As far back as 1990, Gough and Greenblatt edited a collection of writing presenting a robust synthesis of how libraries can reach out to, support, and build collections for the LGBT community. This has prompted libraries to assess the inclusiveness of collections, ensuring that LGBT research as well as non-academic material is included. Ciszek (2011) extended this commitment to studies of campus climate and academic library offerings of LGBT resources. Looking at the presence of online research guides, presence of a designated diversity staff member, and subscription to a popular LGBT database, Ciszek found that there is a correlation between the presence of these items and a more positive campus climate (Ciszek, 2011). International students are also a community often targeted for intentional support. This, too, is often in the form of events and exhibits. The George A. Smathers Libraries at the University of Florida had a successful experience designing events and exhibits in support of International Education Week, a nationally-recognized celebration established by President Bill Clinton in 2000. The Libraries hosted events including the University of Florida's own faculty, who presented on their own international research. The Libraries also hosted a reading event in which participants read their favorite international works aloud and a film viewing exploring Latin American issues. All events allowed for interaction and the sharing of ideas. The Libraries rounded out their week with an impressive line-up of exhibits including Chinese printing, Spanish and Chilean authors, and a global art exhibit. Each of these events attracted community members, including K-12 students (Aissing, 2011).

While these types of diversity initiatives are important, this approach ignores the structural implications of library services and how they may lead to inequality and oppression. Often the approach to provide targeted services to a specific group is too simplistic to achieve true social justice goals. While it is valuable to include the perspectives of targeted groups, this approach does not provide extensive inclusivity as knowledge is constructed. There is also a danger that this approach sustains the marginalization of the targeted groups, displaying them as an exception to the mainstream, not worthy of full

integration. Diversity initiatives, however, are essential to sustain and pave the way for more robust social justice work.

Staffing

In a study of diverse undergraduate and graduate students at a large university in the Midwestern United States, Bonnet and McAlexander (2012) studied the perception of librarian approachability by diverse students. The study found that students tended to identify with librarians who were from the same race, age, and gender category. This indicates that students engage more when they see themselves reflected in library staff (Bonnet & McAlexander, 2012).

Observations like this often spur libraries to focus on staff training and development. Academic librarians have participated in campus diversity learning communities and communities of practice (Rader, 2006; Global Education, 2015). Diversity committees of professional associations also champion diversity at workshops and conference presentations. However, academic libraries begin to move closer to social justice work when the focus turns to recruitment of diverse library staff and the hiring of diversity librarians.

Much of the literature focuses on recruiting diverse library staff. Such work is filled with many noble, yet intangible directives for recruiting a diverse workforce. The language is often general, advising libraries to commit to diversity; actively locate and recruit from marginalized groups; foster communication with marginalized groups; and to include diversity as part of the hiring conversation (Perry, 2006). While important goals, this advice does not speak to the structure of hiring practices, nor does it extend to recognize the parameters set by the host institution within which academic libraries must operate. Suggestions to include discussions of diversity in library school curriculum are useful, but often are of the same topical theme.

Hiring a librarian specifically to concentrate on diversity work is another way libraries have acted on commitments to diversity. Diversity librarians, however, often face job descriptions that span a wide range of responsibilities. From instruction to programming to acting as a liaison to campus partners, a diversity librarian's time is often spread thin. With such an extensive job description, it is often difficult to find librarians who have experience in all required areas. This challenge can be increasingly difficult when diversity is not emphasized in library education programs on par with the traditional subfields of librarianship like reference, instruction, and technical services. Often, these positions are filled by less experienced candidates. Hiring a diversity librarian is a commendable venture, but only if the commitment to diversity is pervasive in the library structure. Otherwise, this action may simply serve as a topical initiative that gives a false sense of accomplishment toward diversity goals (Mestre, 2010).

Displays and Programming

Several libraries promote diversity via library displays and programming. Southeastern Louisiana State University developed a diversity committee to help reach out to diverse groups on campus. The committee has done this through a series of displays, which they have coordinated with various known themes nationally and on-campus. Displays have been set up for Black History Month, Pride Month, and International Week. These displays have included posters, banners, library books, arts, crafts, artifacts, and other materials. Patrons were invited to check out items in the displays. The committee collaborated with the Center for Faculty Excellence on campus to create posters for the displays. The library also coordinated events including film viewings and panel discussions. The film viewings prompted valuable discourse among students, though attendance was sometimes low (Johnson, Hecker, & Lovitt, 2010).

The University of the Pacific's Library also used displays to leverage partnerships to build working relationships with key areas of diversity on campus. The library created displays to support various Multicultural Affairs programming to create an integrated presence on campus for these events. The collaboration evoked positive feedback from participants, but most importantly, the displays served as an ice breaker for the climate within the library. Students who engaged in the displays and events became familiar with the librarian in charge, often seeking the librarian out for help in the future (Maloney, 2012). This type of outcome gets the profession closer to addressing the true, structural goals of social justice work. Instead of the librarian perched behind a reference desk, students were able to engage with the librarian in a less structured setting, making them feel comfortable enough to build a connection that may benefit them in the future. Again, however, it is important to consider the underlying messages of library diversity displays. While it is valuable to shine light on diverse perspectives, are libraries also doing a disservice to marginalized groups by presenting them as an outlier of the mainstream? Thus, it is essential to move beyond diversity to consider true social justice concerns in academic libraries. Several libraries are pushing the boundaries of traditional diversity work. These libraries are building culturally sensitive relationships with patrons, building culturally competent services, considering accessibility through language, and highlighting the economics of resource acquisition in order to challenge traditional structures.

Social Justice Initiatives in Academic Libraries

Academic libraries should seek to move beyond simple diversity initiatives to enact true social justice measures. Williams (2006) suggests conducting a

diversity assessment to gauge the cultural climate of a library. Cultural climate assessments, especially when conducted on a regular basis to track change over time, are invaluable in gauging the library climate and whether library staff and patrons feel social justice issues are considered. Assessments can be the purview of a social justice task force or committee to turn assessment results into tangible action. Following any existing institutional social justice plans, the social justice task force can develop a library-specific social justice plan to formalize social justice efforts (Edwards, 2015). Once the commitment to social justice is formalized, the library can begin to move beyond diversity to social justice by ensuring frameworks are in place to achieve structural equality. The examples below highlight examples of social justice actions academic libraries have admirably taken so far.

Services

Hudson (2010) moves beyond the traditional reference approach of targeting specific groups to begin exploring the structural differences of reference services. In the exploratory study, Hudson (2010) analyzes the impact of cultural differences on the inclination to engage in mobile reference service. The study found that students of different cultural groups may be more or less likely to engage in certain types of mobile reference. This study is important because it moves beyond the assumption that marginalized students do not use services like mobile reference due to a perceived digital divide. In fact, citing the Pew Internet and American Life Project, Hudson confirmed with her own data that marginalized students do use mobile devices, often more so than majority students. Hudson also found that male students of all ethnicities prefer faster text-based reference service to more conversational digital reference via social media, which was most preferred by African American female students. White females tended to use digital services to access materials and did not engage in mobile reference services as frequently. Hudson speculates that marginalized students view digital forms of service and their mobile devices as tools of empowerment (Hudson, 2010).

Friedman (2014) extends social justice thinking beyond the library walls to deliver reference work where activity is happening. Friedman is known for the creation of the Radical Reference movement that initially provided reference service to the protestors of the Republican National Convention in New York City in 2004. Friedman cites that Radical Reference strove to “liberate access to information in unique ways” (p. 264). Even in the age of social media, librarians can serve to provide information literacy coaching, raise awareness of reliable resources, and help people make sense of the barrage of information available to them. Friedman (2014) cites an example of a communication on social media that police were confiscating bikes in certain areas of the protest.

Radical Reference workers were able to provide activists with information about their legal rights concerning this action. Further, this service sees beyond the assumption that all people have smartphones and data plans to access such information on their own. In all ways, the Radical Reference phenomenon transcends the limitations of library structures to provide all information to all people. Similar reference was also seen at the World Trade Organization Protests in Seattle and the Occupy Wall Street movement in New York City (Friedman, 2014). Universities can harness this spirit by providing such services at campus protests, festivals, and events.

Collections

New publishing and database models are challenging resource-strapped libraries to maintain access to resources from diverse perspectives. As vendors become more like monopolists, libraries face limited selection and higher prices. Vendors often concentrate on mainstream titles, offering reduced-price packages. To maintain diversity, libraries must pay for the mainstream packages, then subscribe individually to titles that represent marginalized perspectives. This can be quite prohibitive in an environment of declining budgets. Increasing subscription prices have further exacerbated this phenomenon. When libraries are faced with budget cuts, it is often the single, non-mainstream titles that are cut first.

LaFond and Van Ullen (2000) studied the challenge of access of non-mainstream literature in the face of new vendor models concerning digital resources. The researchers examined the number of alternative titles included in well-known vendor packages. Using the *Alternative Press Index*, a list of alternative titles, LaFond and Van Ullen found that the major vendors carried less than 20% of the alternative titles. The economics of digital resources has very real social justice implications. The structure essentially either denies access to diverse titles or prices them out of the market. Libraries must use studies like this to advocate for increased access to alternative titles.

Further, once libraries gain access to diverse titles, it can be a challenge to make those items accessible to patrons. Catalogers and those who attach subject headings to describe items as finding aids in library catalogues and vendor databases are often not experts in the content of the items they are cataloging. This can compromise the ability to discover these items when a patron does a search. Freedman and Kauffman (2014) offer practical insight for catalogers of zines that can apply to any cataloging effort. As an alternative publishing model, zines can often be particularly challenging to catalog. Authors often vary names, titles, and numbering schemes, magnifying the challenge to catalog (Freedman & Kauffman, 2014). Being aware of the characteristics of zines and being able to catalog appropriately so that the contents are able to be

successfully accessed is an example of how social justice can be addressed at the very ground level of librarianship.

The economics of collection development demonstrates clear social justice concerns. Academic libraries play a role in knowledge construction through collection development. The content that is selected to be part of collections is directly related to which views are permitted to be represented in the broader academic pursuit. As students perform research projects and faculty conduct scholarly work, it is essential to offer an inclusive pool of resources from which to pull. The voices that library patrons have access to directly impacts future knowledge construction. The projects mentioned here are exemplary of where academic libraries need to go with social justice issues regarding collections.

Strengthening Campus Partnerships

Collaborating with other areas on campus helps strengthen funding that has often not been provided to libraries to promote diversity and social justice initiatives. More importantly, collaboration among campus partners strengthens our understanding of each area's important contributions and outlooks. This deeper understanding can help higher education reach a more robust understanding of frameworks that are inclusive and equitable, not just in representation, but in outcome.

Supporting Student Success

Enrollment Management and University College are two important areas on campus. Supporting student access, retention, and success, these units can benefit tremendously from the support the library can offer while the library benefits from building connections with staff and students, gaining an understanding of the unique needs these units serve. Libraries can help build strong academic habits from orientation through the first-year experience and provide support to underprepared students.

At Shawnee State University's Clark Memorial Library, the outreach librarian established a connection with first-year students from orientation through spring semester. As an open-access institution in Appalachian Ohio, Shawnee State University serves an abundance of first-generation and at-risk students. Appalachian students have cultural norms tied strongly to family and place that make their college experience unique. Often coming from underfunded K-12 schools, this population needs additional support to be successful in college (Mathuews, in press).

The Clark Memorial Library recognized this and proposed early relationship building to support student success and create a welcoming climate. Greeting

students at orientation and hosting a party to welcome students to campus introduced students to library staff. As classes began students who attended these events openly greeted library staff as they stopped in between classes. The outreach librarian also visited developmental and university skills courses offered through University College. Recognizing the digital and information literacy gaps that may exist, the library felt that it was important to provide this connection early on (Mathuews, in press). These types of diversity initiatives go beyond the traditional library activities to focus on how students of diverse groups experience the university and the library, providing support to fill gaps.

University and Student Organizations

Carrying the theme of collaboration, Clark Memorial Library also partnered with the university Women's Center. The library was able to secure funding for a book talk to support a speaker hosted by the Women's Center focusing on sexual assault on college campuses. The book was *Crash Into Me: A Survivor's Search for Justice* by Liz Securo. The Library offered free copies of the book to 30 participants. It was important to give the books to the students rather than have them check the books out so that the students could have a personal copy to take to the speaker's event to have signed. This addressed any financial obstacles that students may have that would prevent them from being fully engaged in the event. The discussions focused on how the University of Virginia handled Securo's experience with sexual assault and the structures and norms that do and should exist in our current time (Mathuews, in press).

This event was punctuated by a dinner with Securo in which the Women's Center hosted the Director of Public Safety, the Director and Associate Director of Human Resources, the Dean of Students, Athletic Director, Legal Counsel, the Provost, and Residence Life staff (Mathuews, in press). This was an intentional guest list to reach beyond traditional audiences who typically attend such events to get through to those who possess power within the institution. In these efforts, the library has demonstrated its influence on knowledge construction on campus. By giving voice to a marginalized theme, the campus conversation can be more balanced. Interacting with University officials on the project helps to extend the conversation.

Libraries can also collaborate with international programs to gain a better understanding of how various cultures are affected by the structures of the library and how staff can better interact with students. Though not an academic library, the State Library of New South Wales in Australia has created an innovative tool to help libraries better communicate with patrons. A challenge of academic libraries is that most forms of communication between the library and the student are in the native language. Translators and multi-lingual staff are a financial luxury most libraries cannot afford. The State Library created

a multilingual glossary, freely accessible online, which translates common library phrases into nearly 50 languages. The State Library also offered a web service that offered web content in sixty-five languages. This site also offers translations of government documents and cultural information to help libraries better understand how to support a multicultural patron base (Acevedo & Lo Bianco, 2013).

Librarians at Wayne State University's Shiffman Medical Library took this approach to the classroom. EndNote is a product that helps researchers organize articles and manage citations. Citation management tools like this can often be daunting to learn, especially when you may also be getting acclimated to a new educational culture. The Wayne State University Librarians addressed this by offering the typical EndNote instructional session in the Chinese language. Wayne State University based their project on research that cites that Asian students' listening and speaking skills may not be as well developed as their reading skills. This is particularly challenging when the Asian culture is often more apt to view education as something to consume and observe while respecting authority. Offering a course in the audience's native language instead of the institution's language promotes an atmosphere where students may feel more comfortable to talk about their information needs. Methodologies where a dual-language presentation is employed also showed value because students were able to draw connections between the two languages, promoting a better understanding of English (Danquah & Wu, 2013). Offering services in multiple languages allows diverse voices to be heard. As libraries develop services and resources, it is essential to social justice goals to be aware of and consider diverse perspectives. Being inclusive with language further protects the balanced construction of knowledge on campus.

Call to Action

The library profession is rooted in social justice thinking. This makes academic libraries a natural leader and partner in social justice initiatives on college campuses. However, academic libraries are an untapped resource for this important work. Academic libraries traditionally focus on diversity initiatives to demonstrate the commitment to social justice. While this work is important, it is essential to move beyond diversity to true social justice work that focuses on the structural characteristics of libraries to ensure that students are receiving equitable service and access. Positive outcomes from this work can be magnified when the academic library collaborates with other areas on campus. Such collaboration is beneficial because it raises awareness about the value of libraries, builds a network of higher education professionals whose diverse views can strengthen the structure of the college or university, and takes advantage of shared resources.

Thus it is essential to recruit a diverse staff, train employees, and hire specialists to be mindful of their role in a social justice framework. It is essential to form advisory boards from diverse constituent groups on campus and from all levels of staffing so that they may provide a balancing lens to decisions and strategic planning. It is essential to collaborate across campus to gain a holistic understanding of the campus to better understand our diverse population and ensure inclusive services and resources.

Finally, it is important to keep the conversation fresh and keep pushing toward true social justice work. The profession must ask difficult questions and use empirical work to inform practice. Creating a body of research to inform the profession and the broader higher education landscape will propel higher education into the future of social justice work as we gain a deeper understanding of structural inequality. With such a foundation in social justice thinking, the academic library has the potential to have a meaningful impact to transform higher education.

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