Shifts: How Changes in the US Black Population Impact Racial Inclusion and Representation in LIS Education

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This demographic study contributes to scholarship on the recruitment of Blacks into the US LIS workforce by situating Black librarianship within broader population trends. The research combines historical LIS reports, Africana studies scholarship, and federal data to describe how long-term transitions in the overall US Black population influence LIS. Issues pertaining to middle-class job prospects, higher education attainment, and immigration are investigated. A review of varied evidence suggests that librarianship as a career option remains largely out of sight or out of reach for many Blacks. The article provides recommendations for LIS leaders to achieve synergized recruitment and inclusion efforts.

Keywords: Black librarianship, demography, LIS education, racial diversity, social justice

Calls for racial diversity in the library and information science field have resulted in rich studies on the historic contributions of librarians of color. A segment of this body of research links the historic achievements of Black, specifically African-American, librarians with ongoing efforts to address workforce disparities. North American LIS labor statistics consistently point to representation gaps such that Blacks are proportionately more likely to be library paraprofessionals as opposed to librarians, and librarians rather than library directors or professors (ALA, 2012, 2017; ALISE, 2019; Cooke, 2013).

This study draws on critical race theory, or CRT (Crenshaw, 1994, 2010), which holds that US society is stratified along racialized legal dimensions, and that this racial caste system makes whiteness a political, social, and economic asset. Numerous LIS studies apply a CRT lens (Brook, Ellenwood, & Lazzaro, 2015; Brown, Ferreti, Leung, & Méndez-Brady, 2018; Gibson, Hughes-Hassell, & Threats, 2018; Hall, 2012; Honma, 2005; D. J. Hudson, 2017; K. Johnson, 2016; Kumasi, 2012; Leckie, Given, & Bushman, 2010; Walker, 2015a). Gibson, Hughes-Hassell, and Threats (2018) posit that CRT can help librarians "engage with issues of race; employ transformative understandings of diversity; and provide inclusive, culturally responsive, and anti-bias services" (pg. 239). CRT is thus innate to this line of inquiry.

KEY POINTS

- A century's worth of demographic data on the Black population's higher education attainment, middle-class job prospects, in-migration, and entryways to LIS careers reveal the impact of structural racism on the LIS field.

- Historically Black colleges and universities have been essential to producing Black/ African American librarians. This story of librarianship should be taught throughout the LIS curriculum.

- As both the LIS field and the Black population transform, librarianship presents opportunities for advancing literacy, technology, and Black empowerment.

The goal of this article is to analyze LIS research, Africana studies scholarship, and US federal demographic data to comprehend the impact of social stratification on Black librarianship. The article is organized according to three significant population shifts in the Black middle class, in higher education among Blacks, and among non–US-born Blacks. While the reader will notice some overlap in coverage, great care has been taken to avoid redundancy. It is necessary to also clarify terminology, as some of the language may strike the reader as being out of touch with modern sensibilities. The terms "negro" or "colored" are used only in direct reference. The term "Black" is used in accordance with the current US Census[1] definition referring to "persons having origins in any of the Black native peoples of Sub-Saharan Africa" (US Census Bureau, 2020). Where possible, distinctions are made between race (e.g., Black, White) and specific ethnic groups (e.g., African American, sub-Saharan African, Afro-Latin, Afro-Caribbean). The term "Black diasporic immigrant" is used as an aggregate identifier for non–US-born Blacks—that is, refugees, asylees, naturalized citizens, and permanent residents, whether documented or undocumented.

Black librarianship: A rich history

Nestled within the library history canon is an array of works on the longstanding link between African Americans and libraries. These historical works describe the following:

- the Carnegie "Colored" libraries (Tucker, 1998; Walker, 2017);
- the Julius Rosenwald Fund library program for African Americans (Johnson, 2014, 2019);
- the Jeanes educational fund for African American library development (Dawson, 2001);
- the lack of public library services for Blacks and the fight for desegregation in libraries (Knott, 2015; Malone, 2007; Selby, 2019; Tucker, 1998; Wiegand & Wiegand, 2018; Wheeler, 2005);
- the iconic 135th Street Branch library in Harlem, New York, and its notable librarians (S. A. Anderson, 2003; Carter, 2016; Jenkins, 1990; Nelson, 1996; Skinner, 2015);
- libraries and librarians at historically Black colleges and universities (Allen & Brooks-Tatum, 2014; Gunn, 1986; Love; 2016; Madison & Wesley, 1995; Phoenix & Henderson, 2016; Walker, 2015b; Youmans, 2009);
- the socioeconomic value of libraries in the lives of African Americans (Jackson, Jefferson, & Nosakhere, 2012; Shoge, 2003; Welbourne, 1994);
- the development of independent neighborhood libraries in African American enclaves (Adler, 2021; Gray, 2020);
- the education of Black librarians (Cooke, 2017a; DuMont, 1986);
- and, certainly, a compendium of 12 works on Black librarianship by Dr. E. J. Josey, the first African American male president of ALA and founder of the Black Caucus of ALA, along with works on Josey's advocacy on behalf of African American librarians (Abdullahi, 1992; Chancellor, 2011, 2020).

Josey worked alongside other Black librarian pioneers, including

- Dr. Eliza Atkins Gleason, the first African American to receive a Ph.D. in library science and serve in any leadership capacity in ALA, as well as the founding dean of the Atlanta University library program;

- Clara Stanton Jones, the first African American librarian to direct the library system of a major city as well as the first African American female president of ALA;
- Dr. Robert Wedgeworth, the first African American to serve as IFLA president, ALA executive director, and the dean of Columbia University Library School;
- Dorothy Wesley Porter, librarian, bibliographer, and curator of the Moorland-Spingarn Research Center at Howard University, who worked to address racism in library classification systems;
- Dr. Irene Owens, the first African American to receive a Ph.D. in library science at the University Texas-Austin who, until 2018, served as dean of the only remaining historically Black library school at North Carolina Central University;
- Dr. Virginia Lacy Jones, the second African American to ever receive a Ph.D. in library science (at the University of Chicago) and the first African American president of ALISE;
- and Dr. Carla Hayden, the first African American and woman to serve as Librarian of Congress.

Of course, there are countless others (Jackson et al., 2012; Josey, 1994; Josey & Shockley, 1977).

It is difficult, and perhaps even careless, to speak of Black librarianship without mentioning how racial discrimination has impeded opportunities for prospective librarians of color, to say nothing of the distribution of information services to communities of color. As a result of disenfranchisement, Black librarianship has historically called for duty to both the profession *and* Black upliftment. This necessary response to US racial inequities has inspired passionate and, at times, castigating discourse on Black librarianship. For instance, Andrew P. Jackson (a.k.a. Sekou Molefi Baako), former executive director of the Queens (New York) Langston Hughes Community Library and Cultural Center, writes,

> Activism is as necessary today as it was during the civil rights era . . . some people are afraid to stand, fight, or belong to an organization with "black" in its name . . . some do not see themselves as "black librarians" or "activist librarians," only librarians who happen to be black and, in many cases, do not see the need for activism. No need to join the Black Caucus [of ALA], no need to attend a NCAAL, or a Joint Conference on Librarians of Color (JCLC). Some feel that, in the 21st century, membership in an American Library Association, a roundtable, or a professional organization of their choice is sufficient. Is it? . . . This is America, and there will always be racism, classism, and other-isms that separate and withhold access and services. (Jackson et al., 2012, p. xix)

Purpose of the study

Calls to action must consider other schemas of power—ones that may have resulted in comprehensive changes in the US Black population and thereby the LIS workforce. This research study is guided by a single question: How have demographic transitions in the US Black population's higher education attainment, middle-class career outlook, and in-migration impacted Black librarianship? The aim is, first, to explore a variety of population data to understand factors that might push or pull future Black librarians and, second, to introduce ideas for leveraging these points to increase racial representation and inclusion in the US library profession. New contributions must contextualize this segment of the US LIS

field within broader US societal trends. There is cause to examine, from a demographic standpoint, how the viability and visibility of librarianship as a career choice has changed among Blacks. Greater understanding of Black society can help bridge disconnects between recruitment efforts and workforce realities.

Shifts in middle-class career prospects among Blacks

Like many professions, librarianship has remained largely inaccessible for Blacks as a result of social barriers that impede job prospects. For much of US history, job trajectories for African Americans were limited to the labor sector. This pattern is the byproduct of forced enslavement that relegated African Americans to manual labor between approximately 1619 and 1865 (Frazier, 1949; Hannah-Jones, 2019). In the decades after emancipation, African Americans' efforts to depart from agricultural and domestic work were systemically and vehemently opposed, as author Michele Alexander writes in *The New Jim Crow* (2013). African Americans were only nominally liberated in that they were exploited as cheap and plentiful labor by Whites in power who sought to repair the US South's postwar agricultural economy and at the same time boost the North's fledgling industrial interests (Frazier, 1949).

Historic African American job trajectories and higher education attainment

In 1900, 86.3% of employed African Americans worked in farming (often indentured), operative, and labor jobs. The new African American middle class made up only 2.9% of those employed and consisted of professionals along with proprietors. The Great Depression between 1929 and 1931 would cause this job distribution to remain close to stagnant for several years (US Bureau of the Census, 1975). Meanwhile, school enrollment and literacy rates among African Americans grew. By 1940, there was slight upward mobility among this segment of the population (US Bureau of the Census, 1975), though wage and educational disparities remained vast. The mean salary for African American men was $537, compared to $1,234 for White men. For African American women, the mean salary was $331, compared to $771 for White women. Census figures also indicate that African American males averaged 5.6 years of formal schooling, while their counterparts averaged 9.1 years, and African American women averaged 6.9 years of formal schooling, in comparison to White women who averaged 10.5 years (US Bureau of the Census, 1975). Table 1 demonstrates school enrollment between 1860 and 1940.

Table 1: Percentage of population (ages 5–19) enrolled in school

	1860	1880	1900	1920	1940
Black women	1.8	33.5	32.8	54.5	67.5
White women	57.2	60.5	53.9	65.8	75.4
Black men	1.9	34.1	29.4	52.5	67.5
White men	62.0	63.5	53.4	65.6	75.9

Source: Snyder (1993)

Accordingly, college graduation was a notable feat for African Americans in the early part of the twentieth century considering that literacy and education were still elusive for much of this segment of the US population (Figure 1). It is estimated that at the time of the Harlem Renaissance[2] in the 1920s, about 10,000 African Americans—1 in 1,000—were college educated (Fultz, 1995). Only 17 African Americans held doctorates in 1925. Remarkably, four years later, 109 did (Banks, 1996).

Job options reflected the ideological and social limitations within which African American education was bound. Booker T. Washington and W. E. B. Du Bois emerged as activist leaders in the area of African American educational advancement. Washington championed his Tuskegee model of industrial or technical training (Massey & Denton, 2003; Meier, 1971), which has since shaped science, technology, engineering, and mechanical (STEM) programs at institutions such as Xavier University, North Carolina A&T University, and Meharry Medical College. These universities continue to produce the largest numbers of Black pharmacists, engineers, and medical doctors (US Department of Education, 2019).

Meanwhile, Harvard-educated classical purist Du Bois emphasized liberal arts curricula and promoted the "talented tenth" model (Aldridge, 2008; J. D. Anderson,
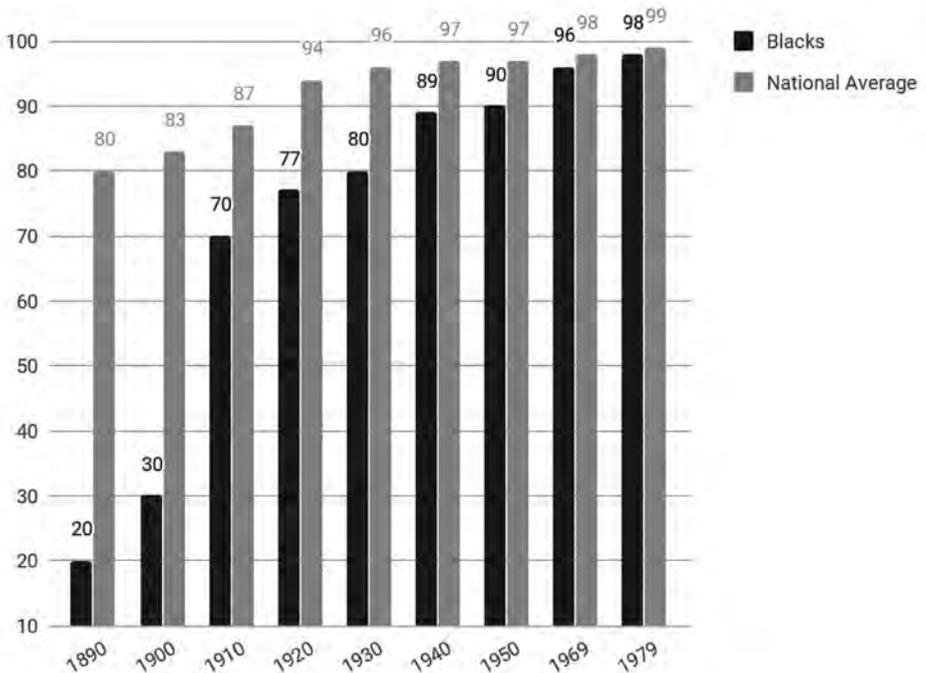

Figure 1: Black and White US adult literacy rates, 1890–1979
Source: Snyder (1993)

1988), an assimilationist prototype that sociologist Ibram Kendi (2013) calls "uplift suasion," or racist good intentions. Du Bois argued that Blacks would achieve equality only by subscribing to being as "well-read and cultured" as Whites (Aldridge, 2008). In his letter to Howard University president Mordecai Johnson in 1930, Du Bois admonished that "industrial education has not produced any great number of farmers or artisans among American Negros, and, on the other hand, college training is sending a disproportionate number of our learned men into the white-collar proletariat" (Du Bois, 1930, para. 3).

Though well-intentioned, both Washington and Du Bois promoted the idea of respectability through social conformity based on a "white gaze," to borrow from novelist Toni Morrison (1992). As problematic as this posture now appears, both leaders succeeded mightily in championing Black higher education. Literacy and college graduation rates among Blacks steadily climbed. Still, graduates who wished to pursue non-technical careers were steered toward select "respectable" book professions (J. D. Anderson, 1988; Franklin & Moss, 2009; Frazier, 1957; Josey, 1970, 1994). Surveying the occupations of Black college graduates in the first half of the twentieth century, Du Bois found that 53.4% of respondents were teachers and 17% were preachers (Banks, 1996).

Increased access to liberal arts education paved the way for African Americans in book careers such as law, literature, education, theology, and librarianship—a pathway that resonated with those who became known as the "Black bourgeoisie," as coined by E. Franklin Frazier (1957), or "the new Negro," according to Alain Locke (1925). The Black intellectual elite included Harlem Renaissance literary luminaries such as Langston Hughes, Zora Neale Hurston, Wallace Thurman, and James Baldwin. As the African American middle class grew, so did African American civic organizations (e.g., the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People [NAACP] and the "Divine Nine" fraternities and sororities[3]); periodicals such as *The Crisis* and, later, *Jet* and *Ebony*; and learned societies (e.g., the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History, which established what eventually became Black History Month).

Historic African American entry into librarianship

Among this New York intellectual community were socialite librarians such as Regina Andersen Andrews (Whitmire, 2007), Nella Larsen (Larson, 1993), and Arna Bontemps (S.C. Alexander, 1976). Harlem's 135th Street Branch library—now the prestigious Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture—then under the directorship of Ernestine Rose, became the group's hub (Jenkins, 1990; Skinner, 2015). Though Harlem became the center for both librarianship and Black progressive thought, African Americans were strategically denied access to library education, specifically at Columbia University (Peterson, 1996; Shiflett, 1994). The 1920 US Census noted 210 Black library workers, but related estimates suggested that there were only six formally educated African American librarians by 1925 (Figa & MacPherson, 2005). There appeared to be rapid short-term growth, however. Van Jackson's (1940) independent survey study suggested that by 1930 there were at least 326 African American library workers, of whom 210 were credentialed librarians. This substantial five-year increase was credited to the 1925 founding of the Hampton Institute for

Library Science, which had graduated 138 Black librarians by that time. Peterson (1996, p. 169) explains how:

> in the late nineteenth to early twentieth century, approximately 10 percent of the Black population lived in the North, where the library movement flourished. Entry into library schools was limited, so the number of Blacks in librarianship was small. A "separate but equal" ethos was part of librarian attitudes, especially after the South developed libraries and founded Black library schools. The opinion of many northerners and southerners was that Blacks could and should go to Black library schools and work in Black libraries with Black patrons.

Black librarianship began to flourish, regardless of racial segregation. The Negro Library Association (NLA) was founded in 1914 in Brooklyn, New York, by Thomas Fountain Blue. Board members included renowned bibliophiles including James Weldon Johnson, Arturo "Arthur" Schomburg (the Schomburg Center's namesake), and Daniel Murray, who, in 1871, became the first African American to earn a position at the Library of Congress (Taylor, 2018). In addition to providing support for Black librarians and book collections, the association "lobbied for the establishment of Professorships for the instruction of Negro Youths in Librarianship" (Crowder, 1994, p. 81). The first Negro Library Conference (NLC) was co-hosted by two premier historically Black colleges in Atlanta, Georgia—Morehouse College and Spelman College—and was financed by the Rosenwald Fund (Josey & DeLoach, 2000).[4] The NLA and NLC were critical to Black librarianship, since the ALA barred African Americans from membership until 1964. Before that time, the ALA Annual Conference reserved very few annual meeting slots for African American attendees, who were permitted to sit only in segregated sections of designated meeting rooms and were prohibited from attending meal functions, visiting conference exhibits, or lodging in conference hotel rooms. African Americans were also prohibited from joining state library associations until the 1950s (Wiegand, 2017).

In the face of racism, librarianship afforded a cosmopolitan career path particularly for African American women, as exemplified by Hannah Atkins, a librarian and civic leader who became the first African American woman elected to the Oklahoma state legislature (Haskins, 1999); Vivian Gordon Harsh, a librarian and a popular figure in Chicago's "Black Renaissance" (Smith & Phelps, 1992); Lucille Baldwin Brown, Florida's first Black public librarian (Florida Division of Library Services, 2018). Learned African Americans were looked upon as exemplars within their communities (Banks, 1996). Yet African American librarianship during this period necessarily conformed to topographies of whiteness (Schlesselman-Tarango, 2017), guardianship, and formality. Walker (2017) writes of the custodial nature of the Andrew Carnegie library grants to Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs). Wiegand (2017, p. 10) similarly describes the Carnegie fund's racist underpinnings:

> Just after World War I, ALA executive secretary Carl Milam told members from the South that the Carnegie Corporation had conceded to their position on race issues and now required communities seeking grants to base their appropriations 'only upon the white population of the towns.' Milam was also quoted as saying the idea that 'negroes have the right to ask for the privileges' of a Carnegie library was a 'misconception.'"

Few others note a clearly prejudiced thread within White corporate charitable library programs. "Work on the history of education for African American librarians uncritically accepts the White, middle-class masculine definition of 'profession' and places African American librarianship within that framework," Stauffer (2016, p. 313) rightly argues.

Black librarianship renewal

The racial assimilationist standard of African American librarianship soon met its match: Black activist librarianship. The era between 1960 and 1990 can be described as a rebirth of Black librarianship that was propelled by a fervent Afrocentric, Black diasporic consciousness. A new Black aesthetic was set in motion during the Civil Rights movement and continued well after by the Black Arts movement. These revolutions were, of course, led by Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., Malcolm X, and other African American political forerunners. African American librarians, too, played an important role in the rally for racial equality. For example, segregated libraries were the sites of the first sit-ins and boycotts. In 2018, ALA apologized for its role in upholding segregation and passed a resolution in honor of African Americans who fought library segregation (ALA, 2017). Bundy and Stielow (1987), Selby (2019), Tucker (1998), Wiegand and Wiegand (2018), and Josey (1970, 1972, 1994) chronicle African American librarians' participation in the fight for civil rights throughout the profession and in society at large.

By the same token, African American librarians also strengthened the Black Arts movement. The post–Civil Rights era ushered a vibrant showcase of Black cinema (e.g., films starring actors such as James Earl Jones, Sidney Poitier, and Dorothy Dandridge); music (e.g., genres such as soul, funk, and early hip hop); literature (e.g., works by Alice Walker, August Wilson, and Gloria Naylor); the popularity of afros and dashikis; the birth of Kwanzaa; and, later, a disavowal of the terms "Colored" and "Negro" for a new identity: African American (Asante, 2005; Monteiro-Ferreira, 2014). In addition to the library leaders mentioned earlier, Augusta Baxton Baker (Miller, 2003), Audre Lorde (De Veaux, 2006), Vivian Ayers (Barnes, 1996), and Mayme Clayton (Pendergast & Pendergast, 2008) were among the prominent Black activist librarians and artists of this period.

Predominantly White institutions' (PWI) library schools mounted significant efforts to integrate their programs (Mulligan, 2006). Examples of these initiatives include Josey's pipeline efforts at the University of Pittsburgh (Abdullahi, 1992; Chancellor, 2019); the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign's Carnegie Scholars program (Cooke, 2017a); and the University of Maryland's Urban Librarianship program and the High John Library project (Cress, 2021). It was against this backdrop that Black students' enrollment in PWI library schools grew, though not without challenges, and the inclusion of Black library leaders within the upper echelons of library organizations led to substantive advancements in the profession (Josey & DeLoach, 2000; Josey & Peeples, 1977; Josey & Shockley, 1977; Tucker, 1998). The Black Caucus of the American Library Association (BCALA) was founded in 1970 during this period of cultural resurgence and activism.

Simultaneously, a broader, human-centered philosophical transition inspired a professional paradigm shift from the stance of the librarian as knowledge gatekeeper to librarian as care ethicist. Jesse Shera (1970, 1972) revitalized Ranganathan's (1931) *Five Laws of Library Science*

and promoted the social epistemological aspect of librarianship that explored the human side of libraries and reading. While the social gospel became a part of mainstream library practice, by reason of racial subjugation, it had long been a part of the African American librarian's mantle. Without those early activists—indeed, the avant garde of Black librarianship—there would not have been the inclusion of librarians of color that took place between 1960 and 1990.

Contemporary job prospects for African Americans

The impact of racial desegregation on African American job prospects is an ongoing area of study, but there is little research on how this transition influenced Black librarianship. With fewer legal hindrances in terms of Black employment and less emphasis on the binary option of applied versus liberal Black higher education, some traditional book professions—namely, the allied fields of education and librarianship that once symbolized status and security for middle-class Blacks—began to lose luster, as some describe it (Boozer, Krueger, & Wolkon, 1992; M. J. Hudson & Holmes, 1994; Tillman, 2004). Since the turn of the twenty-first century, there have been growing concerns regarding the nationwide shortage of Black teachers (Epstein, 2005), as was captured by a *New York Times* editorial, "Where did all the Black teachers go?" (Staples, 2017). Recent Department of Education statistics indicate that students of color are now the majority in US public schools, but teachers of color comprise only 16% of the profession (Dilworth & Coleman, 2014; Ryan & Bauman, 2016). Only 4% of teachers in the United States are Black females, while 2% are Black males.

Black student enrollment in LIS graduate school programs has hardly fared better, according to ALISE statistics. In 1997, Black students made up 4.1% of all MLS students. The majority attended two programs—Clark Atlanta University and North Carolina Central University. Eleven[5] of the then 51 programs lacked Black students. More than 20 years later, this figure remains the same. In 2018, Black students comprised 4.1% of all library school students. Sixteen of the 59 North American programs lacked Black students (ALISE, 2019). Additionally, the pool of new Black librarians may not be adequate to replace outgoing librarians. Long and Sheehan (2015) and Lenzini (2002) warn of the "graying" of the library profession. Jackson notes that "sadly, we are witnessing the transition of elder [Black] librarians and retirement of the generation that entered the profession as a result of battles won and obstacles overturned in the 1950s and 1960s, a time when Black librarians were looked up to as mentors and followed as trailblazers" (Jackson et al., 2012, p. 12).

This portrait of Blacks and higher education raises another matter: in discussing the decline in Black librarians, there is little mention of the embedded socioeconomic hindrances to entering the library profession. Unlike allied fields such as teaching, or comparable applied fields including social work and nursing, librarianship in the United States faces a unique recruitment challenge in that it requires a Master's degree for entry-level professional positions. This alone privileges the profession. To be sure, higher education is much more attainable for marginalized communities. Yet, over 60 years after the 1954 US Supreme Court decision in *Brown v. Board of Education*, it is still out of reach for many.[6] The educational options available to Blacks have been "the logical outgrowth of a social ideology designed to adjust Blacks to racially qualified forms of political and economic subordination" (J. D. Anderson, 1988, p. 3).

For Blacks, the high-school graduation gap has closed, but at the college level it remains wide. Only 22% of the Black population holds an undergraduate degree, and 8.2% obtain graduate education (Kena et al., 2016). These figures suggest that despite the solid progress that Blacks have made in the area of college attainment, a fundamental cause for Black students being underrepresented in library schools lies in that they are missing from US graduate schools in general. Our field can tackle this inequity in higher education for reasons beyond LIS recruitment. Specifically when it comes to the North American model of library education where the Master's is the professional degree, the issue of return on investment further raises the question of whether librarianship is worthwhile.[7] Research has found that graduate education does not boost employment or salary prospects for people of color to the same extent as it does for Whites (Trostel, 2010). Moreover, with the average Black college graduate owing $52,726 (US Department of Education, 2016) yet the mean librarian salary being $59,500 (US Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2020), the desirability of an LIS degree remains precarious.

Shifts in the education of Black librarians

There is also the matter of *where* Blacks are attending college, and this constitutes another disconnect between LIS racial inclusion and representation initiatives. This section elaborates on the centrality of HBCUs in the training of African American librarians. Besides providing library pedagogy, HBCUs fostered many of the college graduates who would eventually go on to predominantly White library schools and eventually the profession. These institutions are frequently overlooked in conversations on US library education.

HBCUs comprise over 100 accredited colleges and universities of all types: public, private, community college, college, and universities. Some were founded as a result of the second Morrill Act of 1890 requiring states to establish separate land grant colleges for African Americans. However, the HBCU designation came about through the Higher Education Act of 1965 that recognized accredited institutions established prior to 1964 with the principal aim of educating Blacks in America (Gasman & Commodore, 2014; U.S. Department of Education, 2019).

Despite questions about the relevance of HBCUs in the twenty-first century, recent data substantiate that there is a continued link between HBCUs and Black upward mobility. HBCUs educate some 32% of Black college students, even though they comprise about 2% of the nation's higher learning institutions (Gasman & Commodore, 2014; Kena et. al, 2016). They also fare better than mainstream universities or PWIs when it comes to improving Black communities and developing Black professionals. According to the Brookings Institute (Reeves & Joo, 2017), over 85% of HBCUs achieved a higher mobility score across all institutions in the United States, meaning that they enroll significantly more first-generation or low-income students and their graduates are more likely to return, relocate, or contribute to Black neighborhoods. HBCU institutions continue to promote Black economic, cultural, political, artistic, and religious interests (Redford & Hoyer, 2017). African American leaders such as Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., Toni Morrison, Oprah Winfrey, Vice President Kamala Harris, and Thurgood Marshall are HBCU alumni.

Likewise, not only were notable Black library educators like Josey, Jones, and Gleason (and, not to mention, other HBCU library directors such as A. P. Marshall and Jessie

Carney Smith) all HBCU alumni, but many current library leaders hold ties to HBCUs. By way of examples, Dr. Carla is the daughter of HBCU professors. Loretta Parham, recent recipient of the James Partridge Outstanding African American Librarian and ACRL Librarian of the Year awards, is co-founder of the HBCU Library Alliance and chief executive officer of the Robert W. Woodruff Library a consortium library that serves the five HBCUs at the Atlanta University Center. The 2019–20 ALA president, Wanda Brown, is an alumna and current director of Winston-Salem State University, while the 2020–21 ALA president, Julius Jefferson, is a Howard University alumnus. Clark Atlanta University School of LIS alumna Kaetrena Davis-Kendrick was recently honored as the 2019 ACRL Librarian of the Year.

The historic recruitment and training of Blacks into the library profession was mostly by virtue of HBCUs; these institutions offered library education when Blacks were excluded from ALA and mainstream library schools. Though there were high-school or apprentice librarianship certification programs for Blacks in the early twentieth century (see Mulligan, 2006, and Johnson-Jones, 2019), the establishment of ALA-accredited Bachelor's and, later, Master's library programs at HBCUs led to substantial gains. As Table 2 displays, over 5,500 Black librarians were trained at Hampton University, Alabama A&M University, (Clark) Atlanta University,[8] the University of the District of Columbia, and the sole remaining North Carolina Central University, or NCCU. The 1970s marked an eventful decade for Black librarianship in that there were four HBCU library schools in operation. In 1971, what was then Atlanta University's library program graduated the largest class up to that point: 109

Table 2: List of library schools at HBCUs

	Hampton University	Alabama Agricultural & Mechanical University	University of the District of Columbia	Clark Atlanta University	North Carolina Central University
Founded	1925	1969	1969	1939	1950
Accredited	1926	1973	Not applicable[a]	1941	1973
Closed	1939	1982	1979	2005	Not applicable
Number of graduates	≥ 183	≥ 367	≥ 112	≥ 2,011	≥ 2,967[b]

[a]The University of the District of Columbia (UDC) was founded in 1977 after the consolidation of three historically Black institutions: D.C. Teacher's College, Federal City College, and Washington Technical Institute, each of which dated back to the 1890s. The library school was established at Federal City College in 1969. In 1977, administrators submitted a self-study report as UDC in pursuit of ALA accreditation but the program was not approved for an external review. It was sundowned that year, with the last class graduating in 1979. For more information, see Ndumu and Chancellor (this issue).
[b]The NCCU graduate tally includes records up to the 2018–19 academic year.
Sources: See Appendix.

new librarians. That same year, NCCU reached 1,000 graduates since its inception. More-over, the Black Caucus of ALA celebrated its one-year anniversary.

To speak of the history of HBCU-based library schools is to speak of the history of the US South. All but five HBCU institutions are located south of the Mason-Dixon line that separates Northern and Southern states, and this is also the case with each of the abovementioned HBCU-based library schools. It is, therefore, necessary to position Black librarianship within US Southern history.

For much of the twentieth century, library resources in southern states were scant. Wiegand and Wiegand (2018) and Knott (2015) write that Blacks were often relegated to small branch libraries, and there was no free public library service for Blacks anywhere in the southeast before 1895. As late as 1913, large metropolitan cities such as Atlanta, Birmingham, Dallas, Mobile, Montgomery, Nashville, New Orleans, and Richmond reported having no public libraries for Blacks (Sutton, 2005). Library development in the region was owed not to White-run municipal governments nor mainstream library schools but to HBCUs and African American librarians with the backing of White corporate philan-thropists. The John D. Rockefeller and Frederick T. Gates General Education Board, for instance, granted millions to HBCU library facilities (Malone, 1996); the Julius Rosenwald Fund appropriated grants for county library development that earmarked services for Blacks (A. M. Johnson, 2014); Enoch Pratt funded one of the earliest integrated public libraries (Hart, 1935); the Jeanes Family Foundation donated at least a million dollars to schools and school libraries for Blacks (Dawson, 2001); and the Carnegie Corporation built library branches for Blacks and financed HBCU library collections (Walker, 2017).

As libraries began to serve southern Black communities and HBCU library schools experienced growth, an enormous but gradual population shift, now recognized as the Great Black Migration, was taking place. Between approximately 1915 and 1970, an es-timated six million African Americans migrated from the southern agricultural states to northern, midwest and western industrialized states. This era has captured tremendous attention among demographers and historians, as evidenced by Lemann's (1991) *The Promised Land* and Wilkerson's (2010) *The Warmth of Other Suns*. The mass exodus of Blacks away from rural southern towns redefined Black towns, businesses, churches, and certainly universities.

Under these circumstances, HBCUs cultivated a feeder pattern for Black librarianship. NCCU and Clark Atlanta University records from 1975 to 1990 demonstrate that a large percentage of their MLS graduates held Bachelor's degrees from 46 HBCU institutions located mainly in Georgia, the Carolinas, Alabama, Virginia, and Tennessee. During the same period, both programs enrolled students from Cameroon, Zambia, Egypt, Nigeria, Botswana, Jamaica, South Africa, Uganda, Ghana, Guyana, Liberia, and Ethiopia. Re-nowned LIS professor Dr. Ismail Abdullahi was one such student. He earned an MLS from NCCU in 1988 and was then recruited by Dr. Josey to the University of Pittsburgh's PhD program. In 2019, Dr. Abdullahi retired after 27 combined years as a LIS educator at Clark Atlanta University followed by NCCU. The prowess that characterizes these two historically Black library schools remains unmatched. The pathway of HBCU students to LIS programs must be revitalized.

Shifts in the US Black immigrant population

Another demographic trend, one that is captured by the growing ethnic diversity among HBCU students, warrants consideration. HBCUs have also played an instrumental role in educating students of Afro-Caribbean, Afro-Latin, and sub-Saharan African descent; these students comprise 19% of HBCU enrollment (George Mwangi, 2014, 2016; George Mwangi & Fries-Britt, 2015). The salient point is that the Black diasporic immigrant population has exponentially increased, and higher education is beginning to recognize this change. In spite of the influences of Afrocentrism on Black librarianship, LIS studies all but acknowledges the ethnic or within-group variance of the US Black population. This cross-section deserves greater attention in LIS research.

Although Asian, mainstream Hispanic, and European immigrants have been present in the United States for hundreds of years, voluntary large-scale Black migration to the country is by comparison a relatively recent phenomenon (Okpalaoka, 2014; Rahier, Hintzen, & Smith, 2010). Some Afro-Caribbean and Afro-Latin immigrants worked in the citrus, railroad, and manufacturing industries in the early 1900s (Wilkerson, 2010). However, traction increased after the Civil Rights Act of 1964 as well as the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965, both of which enacted widespread social reforms (Portes & Rumbaut, 2006).

Large-scale Black migration was also propelled by the dual effects of the pan-African movement—a global diasporic identity that has roots in the realization of shared Black experiences and potential—along with liberation rhetoric that decried colonialism, imperialism, and hegemony (Asante, 2005). Blacks began to emigrate in significant numbers after the independence and the subsequent loosening of travel restrictions among 47 sub-Saharan African and Caribbean nations between 1970 and 1983. In 1980, there were only 816,000 non–US-born Blacks living in the United States, according to census data. The 2010 census estimates suggest that there are between 3.8 and 5.2 million non–US-born Blacks residing permanently in the country (US Bureau of the Census, 2010).[9] The comprehensive US Black population is, therefore, larger and more diverse than ever, a shift that continues to impact the ethnic composition of some cities along with notions of what it means to be Black in America (Okpalaoka, 2014; Suárez-Orozco, Suárez-Orozco, & Qin, 2006; Thomas, 2012; Zong & Batalova, 2014)). Figure 2 represents proportions of Black diasporic immigrant ethnicities.

At the risk of appearing to suggest a homogeneous migration experience among Black diasporic immigrants, which is hardly the case, the remainder of this section will pinpoint similarities in the ways in which they adjust to life in the United States. These social factors may interest LIS educators. Black diasporic immigrants, including Afro-Latin groups from Central and South America, are more likely to speak English when compared to all other US immigrants. Nearly three-quarters (74%) of Black immigrants are proficient English language speakers. The Black diasporic immigrant population overwhelmingly consists of adults; 93% are 18 years old or older. Research indicates that, on average, Black immigrants enter the United States later in life, and they arrive with skills that promote workforce readiness—for example, vocational training and prior work experience (M. Anderson, 2015; Bankston & Hidalgo, 2006; US Bureau of the Census, 2015). Additionally, more than a quarter (26%) of Black diasporic immigrants hold Bachelor's degrees (44% among Nigerian
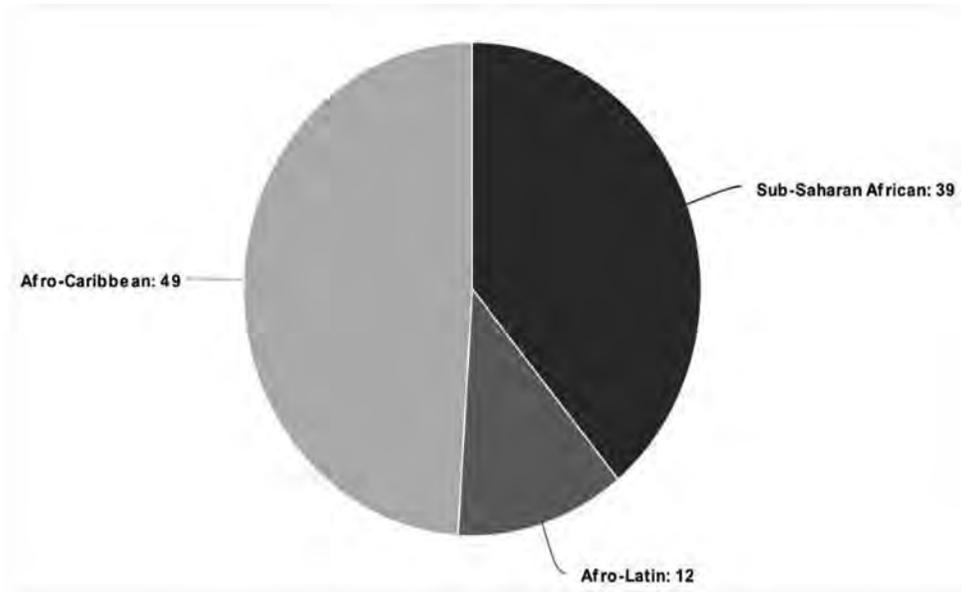
Figure 2: Non-US-born Black population, by ethnicity
Source: US Bureau of the Census (2015).

immigrants). The share of Black diasporic immigrants with advanced or graduate degrees is 11%, just one point shy of the national average, as shown in Figure 3.

Much has been written on the international Black diasporic immigrant brain drain/brain gain phenomenon (Hamilton, 2014; Kaba, 2011; Schiff et al., 2006), whereby receiving countries such as Canada, the United Kingdom, and the United States benefit from the employment skills of educated Afro-Caribbean, Afro-Latin, and sub-Saharan African immigrants, a paradox that is alarmingly similar to Du Bois's talented tenth philosophy. Unfortunately, upon relocation to the United States, many highly skilled immigrants in general are unable to re-credential and thus revert to what are commonly viewed as survival jobs (Baran, Valcea, Porter, & Gallagher, 2018; Batalova, Fix, & Bachmeier, 2016).

The fact that many Black diasporic immigrants are college-educated but underemployed represents professional potential, especially when one factors that over half (54%) are permanent residents or naturalized citizens who can more readily pursue opportunities such as funding for ongoing training or re-credentialing. This is a higher share than US immigrants in general (49%) (M. Anderson, 2017; US Bureau of the Census, 2015). The data on Black diasporic immigrants' socioeconomic standing suggests links to the dual effects of structural anti-immigrant and racial inequalities. Like African Americans, Black diasporic immigrants are disproportionately disadvantaged, which supports the fact that race continues to be a salient status in the United States (Foner, 2016; V. S. Johnson, 2016; Vickerman, 2016; Waters & Kasinitz, 2014). Their collective social capital notwithstanding, Black diasporic immigrants bear the highest unemployment rates and lowest incomes of
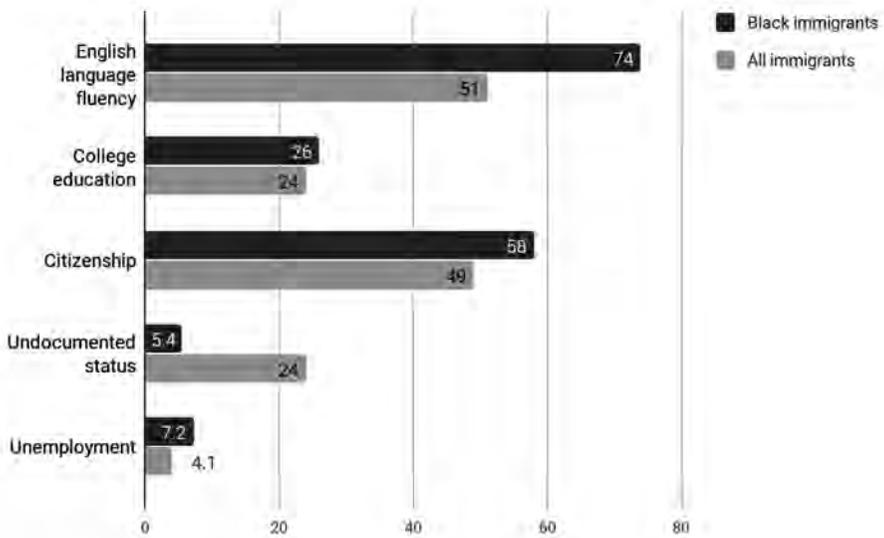
Figure 3: Black immigrants in the United States
*Sources: US Bureau of the Census (2015); BAJI (2014)*Data based on 2015 American Community Survey and the Black Alliance for Just Immigration (BAJI) 2014 State of Black Immigrants report.*

all immigrants (BAJI, 2014). Although they comprise only 7% of US non-citizens and 5.4% of undocumented immigrants, Afro-Caribbean, Afro-Latin, and sub-Saharan African immigrants make up close to 20% of those who are deported (Raff, 2017). Former president Donald Trump repeatedly targeted immigrants from majority-Black nations through his administration's hardline immigration policies and rhetoric.[10]

Blacks in the United States share a common need for racial and social change. Increasing the number of Black diasporic immigrant librarians can empower communities. Librarianship, a profession that is often a second career for US-born groups, is also a promising opportunity for immigrant adults, particularly those whose vocations are not easily transferable to the US marketplace. As we advocate for immigrant communities and study immigrant information behavior, we must also view immigrants as potential colleagues. The Black diasporic immigrant population is a vibrant LIS applicant pool. Strengthening partnerships with and outreach to these groups can have an emancipatory effect.

Implications

This research is intended to give a contemporary perspective that situates the education of Black librarians within broader US population dynamics. The argument is that several demographic changes have influenced professional interests and opportunities among Blacks. These transitions have resulted in librarianship being out of reach, at best, or out of sight, at worst, for many Blacks in the United States. In discussing shifts in the Black middle

class, higher education, and migration, I hope to introduce context, not provoke alarm. The aforementioned trends might appear to be at odds with LIS efforts toward racial inclusion and representation. In actuality, they present pathways for streamlining recruitment.

Particularly when it comes to the North American LIS standard, the Master's degree inhibits entry into the profession. One way of addressing this barrier is by attracting Black undergraduate students who are interested in the intersection of technology and social activism. The book-centric interpretation of librarianship is a byproduct of longstanding ideologies around classic, liberal arts versus applied or STEM disciplines in higher education (as observed through the Washington–Du Bois debate). Yet this reliance on a single view of librarianship discounts various complexities, particularly when it comes to the Black or African American segment of the population. The illiteracy gap having been closed (it has been 30 years since the US Black population's literacy rates reached parity with national averages) and as we resist other inequities around literacy (such as the lack of representation of people of color in literature and the publishing industry), we must also tackle Black inclusion and representation in the digital information sector. There is no shortage of deliberation on library and information science as an iField (Bonnici, Subramaniam, & Burnett, 2009; Burnett & Bonnici, 2013; Hansson, 2019; Shu & Mongeon, 2016; Swigger, 2010). The goal here is not to weigh in on this ongoing dialogue but to suggest that future Black librarians see LIS as a book-centered *and* information technology career path; this matter falls squarely in the LIS realm.

There is room to amplify the ways in which Black librarians contribute to the broader information society. Black librarians are also "library technologists"—that is, specialists in data science, digital scholarship, discovery services, user experience, emerging technologies, or metadata (Maceli & Burke, 2016)—along with digital humanists (e.g., kYmberly Keeton), technocultural critics (e.g., Safiya Noble), and technology strategists (e.g., Beatrice Pulliam). The rise of the Black librarian as digital expert flies in the face of presumptions of e-inequality, digital fatalism, and technological determinism among Blacks. André Brock, an African American digital culture scholar who, like Safiya Noble, received a PhD in library and information science from the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign, describes Black cybercultures:

> Black identity is associated with many things, but the internet—or expertise in information and communication technology practice—is usually not one of them. My claim is ecological: Black folk have made the internet a "Black space" whose contours have become visible through sociality and distributed digital practice while also decentering whiteness as the default internet identity . . . . how they understand and employ digital artifacts and practices . . . is about how Blackness is constituted within the material (and virtual) world of the internet itself. I am naming those Black digital practices as Black cyberculture. (2020, p. 5)[11]

The eclectic, digital nature of Black librarianship remains underestimated. Black librarians are capable, for instance, of leading movements similar to Data for Black Lives, a community of organizers and data scientists who use data to demonstrate and improve the experiences of Black people. Who better than Black librarians to bring awareness to the impact of biased algorithms, barriers to information access, and online misinformation on

vulnerable, specifically Black, communities? For people of color who are drawn to both community care and the information sector, librarianship is an ideal but often overlooked option. When it comes to young adults in particular, ongoing research is needed to gauge Black undergraduate students' knowledge of the LIS field and its vastness. A multifaceted and program-independent LIS outreach campaign should be designed around subsequent evidence.[12]

In the same vein, there might someday be additional HBCU-based LIS programs. For now, existing PWI LIS programs can establish connections with and recognize the value of HBCU graduates and pedagogical tactics in diversifying the library field. These campuses have proven to be conduits for Black librarianship. The intent here is not to romanticize HBCUs (for, like their PWI counterparts, these institutions vary in size, scope, and capacities) but to emphasize that, in training Black librarians, LIS educators can and should glean from the growing body of research that evinces precisely how HBCUs empower students (Arroyo & Gasman, 2015). And, as described through the concept of the virtuous circle of LIS education (Jaeger & Franklin, 2007; Jaeger et al., 2015), the LIS field benefits when students of color such as graduates of NCCU's LIS program (e.g., Dr. Ismail Abdullahi) are welcomed into PhD programs and eventually the LIS professoriate.

There are also opportunities to attract non–US-born Blacks to librarianship; the LIS professions present avenues for transitioning from pre- to post-migration vocation. Those who assist immigrant communities have the privilege of recommending the LIS field. An important aspect of cultural competence is ensuring that community members see themselves represented in the library workforce (Cooke, 2017b; Edwards, Unger, & Robinson, 2013). Welcoming and supporting Black immigrant librarians is a remarkable way of making libraries more multiethnic, multicultural, and multilingual, to quote Overall (2009). And, in the spirit of solidarity, Afro-Latin, Afro-Caribbean, and sub-Saharan African immigrants should be acknowledged in conversations on Black librarianship.

Conclusion

The year 2020 marked the 50th anniversary of the Black Caucus of ALA and 95 years since the founding of the first historically Black library school at what is now Hampton University. This moment was fit for contemplating Black librarianship's rich past and ripe future. The Black population continues to evolve; LIS professionalization must adapt accordingly. Historical data on the Black middle class, higher education, and immigration suggest that there may be promise and high yield in inviting Black and/or HBCU undergraduate students as well as Black diasporic immigrants to the profession, and providing strong support throughout.

This study was limited in that there was room to discuss only those demographic trends that directly influence Black society's comprehensive educational/workforce attainment and propensity toward the LIS profession. By no means is it complete. Future studies might explore other subsections of the US Black population—for instance, correlations between the lack of racial representation in LIS and other dynamics such as mass incarceration and the school-to-prison pipeline which have significantly impacted the US Black male population. Of all racial subgroups in the United States, Black males are the least represented in LIS; the most recent ALA figures indicate that there are only 563 Black male librarians

(0.47% of the profession), nearly 200 less than in 1990 (ALA, 2017).[13] It would be interesting to probe this reality in light of the fact that Black males comprise only 17% of college graduates but 40% of the US prison population (M. Alexander, 2013).

Attracting librarians of color has historically relied on the capacity of individual LIS programs to embrace racial diversity and inclusion (Caidi & Dali, 2017), but there is now greater recognition of extrinsic factors such as the extent to which the LIS field reflects broader US racial discrimination. Other important gains include sustaining effective, long-term national mentorship and scholarship initiatives such as ALA's Spectrum scholarship program. Equally impactful is the normalization of discussions on anti-racism within LIS workplaces, conferences, education, and research.

The hope is that this article also contributes to critical scholarship on LIS and US racial stratification. Diversity efforts must be coupled with "big picture" or demographic perspectives. Such understandings make patterns and voids discernable and lend intentionality to the work of addressing the stark lack of racial representation in the LIS professions.

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Acknowledgments

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Notes

1. The 2020 US Census paired the "Black" racial classification with country of origin (not US citizenship) and ethnic identification.
2. The Harlem Renaissance is a period of African American intellectual and artistic achievement that took place in Harlem, New York City, throughout the 1920s. It was first known as the "New Negro" movement and was led by academic and writer Alain Locke (see Locke, 1925).
3. The "Divine Nine" African American Greek letter fraternities and sororities are (in order of founding): Alpha Phi Alpha, Alpha Kappa Alpha, Kappa Alpha Psi, Omega Psi Phi, Delta Sigma Theta, Phi Beta Sigma, Zeta Phi Beta, Sigma Gamma Rho, Iota Phi Theta. See Brown, Parks, & Phillips (2010).
4. A chronology of events in Black librarianship is available in Josey and DeLoach (2000). Similarly, Davis-Kendrick (2009b) lists works on librarians of color and racial/ethnic diversity in US LIS.
5. ALA-accredited programs include US and Canadian institutions.
6. The 1954 *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka*, 347 U.S. 483, was a landmark United States Supreme Court case in which the Court declared state laws establishing separate public schools for Black and White students to be unconstitutional.
7. The works of Percell, Larin, Jaeger, and Bertot (2018), Swigger (2010), and Cox (2010) provide insight on the ramifications of the 1951 transition from undergraduate to graduate credentialing in US librarian professionalization.
8. Clark Atlanta University is the result of the 1988 consolidation of Clark University (est. 1869) and Atlanta University (est. 1865).
9. 2020 Census Bureau population data was not yet released by this article's publication date.
10. Half of the nations on former president Trump's Executive Order 13780 travel ban limiting travel to the United States were in Africa, a higher percentage than any other region despite the lack of evidence of terror threats from these nations.
11. Brock also writes, "In my extensive reading of science and technology studies, as well as information science, library science, and information studies, I have found entire texts (and disciplines) full of unexamined whiteness."
12. The Black Caucus of the American Library Association has taken up this very aim through initiatives like the Breaking Barriers: National Forum on the future of Black librarianship, made possible through IMLS (Grant # RE-246443-OLS-20).
13. Davis-Kendrick's (2009a) study on African American male librarians provides great context. A subsequent study might explore the opposite or why African American males are missing from LIS.

Appendix: Archival sources

American Library Association Archives. Alabama A&M University School of Library Media Accreditation, 1967-1980: Reports, reviews and correspondences. (Box 31). University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign.

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