

Where Do We Stand? Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Social Justice in North American Library and Information Science Education

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The field of LIS continues to face a vexing paradox. Its longstanding ideal of and concomitant commitment to serving diverse communities and users equally has failed to translate into diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) in the profession or in LIS education. This article analyzes efforts to promote diversity, equity, and inclusion in North American LIS programs between 1971 and 2018. First, it addresses change and continuity in diversity-centered LIS scholarship over time. Second, it unpacks key terms such as diversity, equity, and inclusion. Third, it underlines the importance of and mandate for diversity, adducing demographic change and social justice, and suggests cultural competence as a key vehicle for DEI work. Fourth, it examines recruitment and retention efforts and their results, strategies to weave DEI and social justice topics into the curriculum, and barriers to such efforts. Finally, areas for further research are suggested.

Keywords: cultural competence, curriculum development, diversity, equity, and inclusion, pedagogy, recruitment and retention, social justice

It is simply not enough to declare that because one is a member of an underrepresented community that a commitment to diversity and social responsibility can be taken for granted. Neither can one assume that lack of membership in an underrepresented group precludes a commitment to social responsibility and diversity in teaching and research.

—Roberts & Noble (2016), p. 518.

In a 2018 report on the future of Library and Information Science (LIS) education, the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) underscored the profession's lack of racial and ethnic diversity, which seemed ever more conspicuous given national demographic changes (Sands, Toro, DeVoe, Fuller, & Wolff-Eisenberg, 2018). The report pointed out barriers to formal LIS education: not merely its cost, but also its tendency to adopt synchronous delivery of course content, thus penalizing those without flexible schedules, and its lack of RA and TA positions for distance learners. It recommended that LIS programs recruit from Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) and Minority Serving Institutions (MSIs) more generally, provide a greater number of scholarships, recruit paraprofessionals, and weigh the merits of alternative methods of educational credentialing.

But the concerns raised and the suggestions proffered by IMLS have a lengthy history. Fully four decades before the report, scholars such as Carter (1978) identified similar problems and offered similar recommendations. In the late 2010s, in fact, LIS continued to stare down a bedeviling paradox. The profession's inveterate ideal of and concomitant commitment to serving diverse communities and users equally had failed to translate into

diversity, equity, and inclusion in LIS education or in the profession overall (Jaeger, Subramaniam, Jones, & Bertot, 2011; Jaeger et al., 2015; Subramaniam & Jaeger, 2010).

This paper scrutinizes the trajectory of this paradox in LIS education. We first trace change and continuity in LIS diversity efforts. Next, we explore the definition of foundational terms such as diversity, equity, and inclusion and the changing ways in which scholars have circumscribed and embellished these terms. Third, we stress the importance of and imperatives for diversity, highlighting demographic change and social justice. Fourth, we examine recruitment and retention and pedagogical strategies and challenges. Finally, we suggest directions for future research.

hooks (1994) insisted, “The classroom remains the most radical space of possibility in the academy” (p. 12). A broad array of LIS stakeholders must embrace the responsibility to use that radical space to promote diversity, equity, inclusion, and social justice.

KEY POINTS:

- Demographic change and social justice are vital reasons to promote diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) in library and information science (LIS).
- Recruitment, retention, and mentoring remain essential to DEI work.
- LIS stakeholders at all levels—administrators, faculty, staff, and students—must commit to multiple, overlapping DEI interventions such as curriculum-wide coverage, concentrations, or specializations; individual courses, both required and elective; critical pedagogy; internships, practica, and field experiences; community engagement; cultural competence training; and student groups and other extracurricular opportunities.

Methods

This article relies upon documentary evidence (Hodder, 2000; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Platt, 1981a, 1981b; Shenton, 2013; Wildemuth, 2009). We focused on sources published in peer-reviewed English-language journals between 1971 and 2018. Search strategies included backward and forward citation chaining, journal browsing, and database searching (e.g., subject, keyword, and author)—the hallmarks of berrypicking.¹ Ours remained an evolving search: “at each stage, with each different conception of the query, the user may identify useful information and references . . . the query is satisfied not by a single final retrieved set, but by a series of selections of individual references and bits of information at each stage of the ever-modifying search” (Bates, 1989).

Change and continuity over time

Over the past four-plus decades, many scholars have lamented the long-time monochromaticity of librarianship. They point not only to the relative lack of diversity efforts but also to the unprepossessing results of these efforts. Carter (1978), for example, depicted a profession dominated by middle-aged, white women. She found an increased number of librarians of color but attributed most of this increase to one-off, externally funded initiatives. In another inauspicious finding, she found few role models for librarians from demographically under-represented groups. Nearly fifteen years later, although librarianship seemed unprecedentedly focused on diversity, ALISE statistics showed scant improvement in African American, Latinx,

Asian, and Native American representation since the 1964 Civil Rights Act (Josey, 1993; Peterson, 1994). Though he discerned “a few bright spots,” Josey (1991) concluded, “the statistics and the findings do not indicate that a vigorous or positive program has been undertaken in library and information science” (p. 20). Chu (1995a) agreed, seeing little progress. Worse, 1990s efforts neither increased awareness about diversity nor redressed past discrimination nor improved organizational environments nor altered the profession’s demographics (Peterson, 1999; Winston, 2001a).

The demographic disjuncture between LIS students and the national population persisted in the 2000s (Kumasi & Hill, 2011; Mestre, 2010). Mestre (2010) even charged that training and liaison efforts had decreased in priority, given budgetary exigencies and personnel shortages. Scholars writing in the mid-2010s, such as Cooke & Minarik (2016), Cooke & Sweeney (2016), and Gollop & Hughes-Hassell (2016) agreed: Diversity and social justice educational efforts remained cyclical, reactive, short-lived, and indirect. Echoing Josey (1993), Jaeger and Hill (2017) found little demographic change over the previous 25 years, while Caidi and Dali (2017) suggested that despite good intentions coupled with targeted initiatives (conferences, celebratory events, public presentations and conversations, and scholarly publications), diversity was scarcely increasing in terms of the number of professionals, faculty, students, and resources. Cooke (2017) argued that LIS remained insufficiently diverse; Cooke and Jacobs (2018) again noted the lack of workforce and curricular diversity; and Sands et al. (2018) revisited staff retention problems and homogeneous workplace cultures.

Even as they critiqued the profession, however, scholars recognized a modicum of progress. For example, East and Lam (1995) contended that appreciable change was occurring. Kumasi and Hill (2011) later found that LIS literature increasingly included marginalized perspectives and promoted cultural competence, and Hill and Kumasi (2012) concluded that LIS had progressed toward appreciating culturally diverse information needs. Roy (2015), meanwhile, discerned support for diversity among LIS faculty and members of professional organizations, and Adkins, Virden, and Yier (2015) applauded the increase in diversity coverage in LIS education. Cooke and Sweeney (2016) shored up this argument, noting the increased salience of social justice to LIS education. Finally, Anaya and Maxey-Harris (2017)’s study of ARL libraries ascribed heightened awareness of and appreciation for diversity and inclusivity both to campus leadership efforts and to a salubrious national political climate.

Overall, scholars express considerable ambivalence about LIS diversity past and present. They continue to call out a profession, a student body, and a faculty lacking in demographic diversity. Even so, scholars point to scattered and modest successes.

The challenge of definition and operationalization

The meaning of the term *diversity* with respect to LIS education remains protean and contested; this may ultimately muddle efforts to promote diversity-related work (Cooke, 2018; Cooke & Jacobs, 2018; Pawley, 2006; Welburn, 1994). Peterson (1994), for example, centered racial groups, namely African Americans and Native Americans, marginalized by legal and institutional oppression. She dismissed the notion of framing “race, physical ability, sexual orientation and other characteristics as all equal in the experience of injustice” (p. 24). In this spirit, Peterson (1996) found the advent of “multiculturalism” patently offensive, merely

obfuscating conversations concerning equity “with the mantra, ‘Everyone is different, and isn’t that special?’” (pp. 171–172). Peterson (1999) followed up in this tenor, asserting that “[e]quity issues have become clouded by a ‘me too’ claim to victim status, where everyone’s differences become equal in experience, thereby diminishing the possibility of achieving equity” (p. 21). She decried diversity conversations as well: “Diversity defaults to little progress and substantial rhetoric that many can join in on without sacrifice or regulation that the promise of equity will be fulfilled” (p. 21). Additionally, Peterson (1999) castigated the American Library Association and library science programs for a lack of rigor in defining diversity, much less enacting meaningful curriculum reform or developing a policy or research agenda under its aegis. Honma (2005) likewise critiqued the lack of attention paid to race in LIS, and Pawley (2006), too, advocated for weighting characteristics differently even while giving race pride of place.

By contrast, Gollop (1999) favored broadening the definition of diversity; she explicitly mentioned ableness as well as race and ethnicity. Along these lines, Subramaniam and Jaeger (2010, 2011), Jaeger et al. (2011), Jaeger, Bertot, and Subramaniam (2013b), Chu (2013), and Lee, Chancellor, Chu, Rodriguez-Mori, and Roy (2015) all called for capacious definition, in terms of both visible (age, race/ethnicity, gender, ableness, socioeconomic class) and invisible components (language, literacy, educational background, sexual orientation, culture, birthplace, and religious, moral, and political values or beliefs). Participants in empirical studies conducted by Mehra et al. (2011) and Adkins et al. (2015) also advanced an expansive understanding of diversity.

In this vein, the Association of Library and Information Science Education’s Diversity Taskforce ecumenically characterized diversity as “the representation of the wide variety of backgrounds (including racial, cultural, linguistic, gender, religious, international, socio-economic, sexual orientation, differently-abled, age among others) that people possess and is often used to address quantitative requirements/agendas/goals” (ALISE, 2013). ALISE (2013) also brought into the conversation the notion of inclusion—“what happens to people once they are in an organization, institution or social context.” Complementing diversity, inclusion constituted full representation, participation, and empowerment; it also implied combating all types of discrimination (ALISE, 2013).

Like ALISE, the American Library Association (ALA) intervened. Its Task Force on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (2016) characterized inclusion as constituting “an environment in which all individuals are treated fairly and respectfully; are valued for their distinctive skills, experiences, and perspectives; have equal access to resources and opportunities; and can contribute fully to the organization’s success” (p. 21). Additionally, the ALA Task Force posited that some groups had been systemically disadvantaged in accessing both education and employment. These groups therefore remained organizationally and institutionally underrepresented or marginalized. Given this legacy, a commitment to equity ensured fair policies, practices, processes, and outcomes.

Cooke, Sweeney, & Noble (2016) and Caidi & Dali (2017) described diversity as an impossibly nebulous term, a sentiment that harkened to Pawley (2006) as well as Peterson (1994, 1996, 1999). Such an unduly broad definition risks papering over the differing historical experiences of marginalized groups such as African Americans—or even diluting diversity advocates’ efforts. To address diversity optimally, advocates should agree upon an

operational definition, even if temporarily. Spivak's strategic essentialism is one promising strategy (Gross, 1985). Eschewing both quotas and standards, ALISE (2013) called instead for active recruitment and full participation. The association conceded, moreover, that diversity remained an "evolutionary process" demanding vigilance and "ongoing commitment."

The Gordian knot of definition aside, efforts must hinge on equity and inclusion, not just diversity (Gorski & Swalwell, 2015; Peterson, 1999).

The DEI imperative

Changing demographics and social justice represent foundational reasons to promote diversity, equity, and inclusion. Social justice work in turn depends upon cultural competence.

Changing demographics

Numerous scholars adduce national demographic evidence as an impetus for diversification (Abdullahi, 1992, 2007; Alire, 2001; Al-Qallaf & Mika, 2013; Cooke, 2017; Cooke & Minarik, 2016; East & Lam, 1995; Gollop, 1999; Hughes-Hassell & Vance, 2016; Jaeger et al., 2011, 2013b; Jaeger & Franklin, 2007; Josey, 1991, 1993; Knowles & Jolivet, 1991; Kumasi & Hill, 2011; Mestre, 2010; Sands et al., 2018; Winston, 1998, 2001a). Echoing Totten (1977), Jaeger and Hill (2017) warned, "Until the composition of our field parallels the very diverse—and continually diversifying—composition of society as a whole, the information professions and institutions will not truly represent or be best positioned to be inclusive of and meet the needs of the many populations that comprise our diverse society" (p. 212). Nonetheless, Cooke and Jacobs (2018) recently lamented that LIS still neither reflected nor understood its diverse constituencies.

Demographic statistics on LIS students and faculty culled from ALISE's Statistical Reports paint a rather more complex picture, particularly given the organization's penchant for adding demographic categories over time (Tables 1–4) and, depending upon the year, the programs included in the data sets (AALS, 1980; ALISE, 2021; Daniel & Saye, 2000; Sineath, 1990; Wallace & Naidoo, 2010). Categories added over time include "international," "unknown," "Hawaiian/Pacific Islander," and "2 or more." Other new categories such as non-binary gender or ableness will likely follow, further confounding clear comparison. Perhaps most important, however, is the high percentage of "unknown."

Bracketing these categorical concerns, over four decades (1980–2020), demographic representation among LIS students (as indicated by degrees and certificates awarded by ALA-accredited institutions) (Table 1) shows the following trends: small increases in the percentages of Native Americans (0.21% to 0.3%) and Asians (2.46% to 2.9%), and more substantial increases in the percentages of African Americans (3.64% to 4.82%), Latinx (1.37% to 7.31%), and international students (4.32% in 1990 to 4.85 in 2018). Perhaps most surprising given common perceptions about the field's demographic composition, that period saw a substantial decrease in the percentage of whites (74.69% to 59.51%).

Narrowing the time frame, the period from 2010 to 2020 witnessed a decrease in the percentages of Native American LIS students (0.53% to 0.3%), Asians (3.51% to 2.9%), and whites (70.03% to 59.51%). The decrease in the percentage of white students over the course of the decade is particularly noteworthy. Conversely, the period saw an increase

Table 1: LIS student demographics

Year	American Indian	Asian	Black	Hispanic of any race	Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	White	International	2 or more	Unknown	Total
2020	20 (0.3%) ^b	194 (2.9%)	322 (4.82%)	489 (7.31%)	8 (0.12%)	3,979 (59.51%)	324 (4.85%)	157 (2.35%)	1,193 (17.84%)	6,686
2010	38 (0.53%)	252 (3.51%) ^b	313 (4.36%)	333 (4.63%)	N/A	5,032 (70.03%)	149 (2.07%)	N/A	1,068 (14.86%)	7,185
2000	20 (0.4%)	143 (2.83%) ^b	201 (2.98%)	144 (2.85%)	N/A	3,964 (78.56%)	98 (1.94%)	N/A	476 (9.43%)	5,046
1990	14 (0.37%)	96 (2.53%)	161 (4.24%)	67 (1.77%)	N/A	3,184 (83.94%)	164 (4.32%)	N/A	107 (0.93%)	3,793
1980	10 (0.21%)	118 (2.46%)	175 (3.64%)	66 (1.37%)	N/A	3,588 (74.69%)	N/A	N/A	N/A	4,804

Notes. ALISE statistics focus on the previous full academic year. For example, 2020 includes those who graduated in 2018-19. Since 1980, newly added student demographic categories include “international,” “unknown,” “2 or more,” and “Hawaiian/Pacific Islander.”
^aCategory includes Alaskan.
^bCategory includes Asian and Pacific Islander.

Table 2: LIS faculty demographics

Year	American Indian	Asian	Black	Hispanic of any race	Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	White	International	2 or more	Unknown	Total
2020	4 (0.42%)	140 (14.7%)	48 (5.03%)	23 (2.41%)	5 (0.52%)	564 (59.18%)	8 (.84%)	12 (1.26%)	149 (15.63%)	953
2010	6 (0.8%)	101 (13.8%)	37 (5.1%)	24 (3.3%)	N/A	564 (77%)	N/A	N/A	N/A	732
2000	5 (0.8%)	37 (6.1%)	51 (8.4%)	15 (2.5%)	N/A	497 (82.1%)	N/A	N/A	N/A	605
1990	1 (0.18%)	16 (2.92%)	48 (8.76%)	4 (.73%)	N/A	489 (89.23%)	N/A	N/A	N/A	548
1980	2 (0.32%)	15 (2.4%)	34 (5.44%)	8 (1.28%)	N/A	566 (90.56%)	N/A	N/A	N/A	625

Note. Since 1980, new faculty demographic categories include “Hawaiian/Pacific Islander” (formerly classified under “Asian”), “2 or more,” “international,” and “unknown.”

in the percentages of African Americans (4.36% to 4.83%), Latinx (4.63% to 7.31%), and international students (2.07% to 4.85%). These latter trends seem salutary indeed.

Statistics on LIS faculty between 1980 and 2020 show similar nuance (Table 2). The percentages of American Indians (0.32% to 0.42%), Hispanic/Latino (1.28% to 2.41%), and Asians (2.4% to 14.7%) increased. The inroads made by Latinx and Asian faculty are especially appreciable. Conversely, the percentage of African Americans (5.44% to 5.03%) decreased, and the percentage of whites (90.56% to 59.18%) plummeted.

Narrowing the time frame, between 2010 and 2020, LIS faculty saw a slight increase in the percentage of Asians (13.8% to 14.7%). By contrast, the decade ushered in a decrease in the percentages of Native Americans (0.8% to 0.42%), African Americans (5.1% to 5.03%), Latinx (3.3% to 2.41%), and whites (77% to 59.18%). Again, the decrease in the percentage of white faculty bodes well for future professional diversity. Juxtaposing LIS student and faculty statistics from 2019 indicates an extraordinary overrepresentation of Asian faculty compared to Asian students (14.70% vs. 2.90%), a slight overrepresentation of Hawaiian/Pacific Islander faculty (0.52% vs. 0.12%), a substantial underrepresentation of Hispanic/Latino faculty (2.41% vs. 7.31%), a substantial underrepresentation of international faculty (0.84% vs. 4.85%), and an underrepresentation of faculty of two or more races (1.26% vs. 2.35%) (Table 3). Perhaps most surprising, near parity prevails between white faculty and students (59.18% vs. 59.51%).

The recategorization of certain demographic groups and the addition of new demographic categories over time renders comparison difficult. This is the case with Hawaiian/Pacific Islander (formerly under the aegis of Asian) (from N/A to 0.52%), with 2 or more (N/A to 0.84%), with international (N/A to 1.26%), and most glaring, with unknown (N/A to 15.63%). Conclusions remain necessarily provisional.

Comparing 2020 statistics on LIS with the most recent US Census information (2019) suggests five points (Table 4). First, Native Americans/Alaskans (1.3% of the US population) were slightly underrepresented among both LIS students (0.3%) and faculty (0.42%). Second, Asians (5.9% of the US population) were appreciably underrepresented among students (2.9%) but vastly overrepresented among faculty (14.7%). Third, African Americans (13.4% of the US population) were greatly underrepresented among students (4.82%) and faculty (5.0%). Fourth, Latinx people (18.5% of the US population) were also greatly underrepresented among both students (7.31%) and faculty (2.41%). Finally, whites (60.1% of the US population) were slightly underrepresented in faculty (59.18%) and in students (59.51%). Given the dramatic changes in LIS demographics since 2010, the forthcoming 2020 census will permit a fruitful updated assessment.

When one reviews the statistics (1980–2020), there seems reason for both optimism and pessimism. First, just as the overall increase in the percentages of African Americans, Latinx, and international students and the dramatic decrease in white students seems propitious, so does the modest increase in the percentages of Native Americans and Latinx faculty, the dramatic increase in the percentage of Asian faculty, and the dramatic decrease in the percentage of white faculty. Second, there remain grounds for pessimism, namely due to the decrease in the percentages of Native American and Asian students and the decrease in the percentage of African American faculty. Peterson (1999) problematizes facile demographic assessments and projections, however, noting astutely, “it is not numbers that dictate the distribution of

Table 3: 2020 LIS faculty and students

	American Indian	Asian	Black/ African American	Hispanic/ of any race	Hawaiian/ Pacific Islander	White	International	2 or more	Unknown	Total
2020 Students	20 (0.3%) ^a	194 (2.90%)	322 (4.82%)	489 (7.31%)	8 (0.12%)	3,979 (59.51%)	324 (4.85%)	157 (2.35%)	1,193 (17.84%)	6,686
2020 Faculty	4 (0.42%) ^a	140 (14.70%)	48 (5.03%)	23 (2.41%)	5 (0.52%)	564 (59.18%)	8 (0.84%)	12 (1.26%)	149 (15.63%)	953

^aCategory includes Alaskan

Table 4: United States population

	American Indian	Asian/ Pacific Islander	Asian	Native Hawaiian/ Other Pacific Islander	Black	Hispanic	White	Other	2 or more ^a
2019 ^b	1.3% ^c	N/A	5.9%	0.2%	13.4%	18.5%	60.1%	N/A	2.8%
2010	2,932,248 (0.9%)	15,214,265 (4.9%)	N/A	N/A	38,929,319 (12.6%)	50,477,594 (16.3%)	223,553,265 (72.4%)	19,107,368 (6.2%)	9,009,073 (2.9%)
2000	2,475,956 (0.9%)	10,641,833 (3.8%)	N/A	N/A	34,658,190 (12.3%)	35,305,818 (12.5%)	211,460,626 (75.1%)	15,359,073 (5.5%)	6,826,228 (2.4%)
1990	1,959,234 (0.8%)	7,273,662 (2.9%)	N/A	N/A	29,986,060 (12.1%)	22,354,059 (9.0%)	199,686,070 (80.3%)	9,804,847 (3.9%)	N/A
1980	1,420,400 (0.6%)	3,500,439 (1.5%)	N/A	N/A	26,495,025 (11.7%)	14,608,673 (6.4%)	188,371,622 (83.1%)	6,758,319 (3.0%)	N/A

^aBy 2000, the US decennial census had added "two or more."

^bSource for 2019: <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/US/PST045219>

^cCategory includes Alaskan.

resources and power” (p. 172). ALISE’s most recent statistics indicate that 31 of 49 LIS deans or directors and 116 of 195 LIS full professors are white; just one dean or director and eight full professors are Black, and just one dean or director and six full professors are Hispanic/Latino (Association of Library and Information Science Education, 2021).

Ultimately, demographic data remain challenging to interpret and to juxtapose over time. Notions of under- and overrepresentation are slippery; in fact, the demographic picture may well be more encouraging than scholars recognize. The underrepresentation in LIS faculty and students of African American and Latinx people compared to their representation in the national population remains troubling, however: A call to action is imperative.

Social justice

In addition to demographics, scholars invoke social justice in advocating for increasing LIS DEI. The concept of social justice increasingly guides LIS theory, practice, and curriculum development (Rioux, 2010). Social justice embraces critical consciousness, reflexivity, and cultural competence in service of socially salubrious outcomes (Cooke & Sweeney, 2016; Mehra & Rioux, 2016). By illuminating power asymmetries, it promotes equity for oppressed, marginalized, or underrepresented groups (Cooke & Sweeney, 2016; Kumasi & Manlove, 2015). It may be employed as theory, as topic, and as tool in the curriculum, in extracurricular activities, or in professional development (Cooke et al., 2016).

Topics such as civic participation, digital inclusion, social services, privacy, environmental sustainability, intellectual freedom, equitable information access, information literacy, civic concern, outreach to underserved populations, and digital literacy represent seminal LIS concerns (Jaeger et al., 2013a, 2016; McCook, 2002; Mehra & Singh, 2016; Rioux, 2010, 2016; Winkelstein, 2016). According to Cooke, Sweeney, & Noble (2016), Irvin (2016), and Roberts & Noble (2016), ignoring social justice furthers the chimera of librarianship as objective and neutral. LIS programs must therefore prepare students to challenge structural inequality and foreground justice-oriented professional practice (Cooke & Sweeney, 2016). Social justice work revolves around cultural competence.

Cultural competence

Cultural competence is a dialectical, developmental process interleaving cognitive, interpersonal, and environmental elements. Individuals develop cultural competence by apprehending the importance of culture, by appreciating diverse cultural backgrounds via authentic interaction, and by integrating diverse groups’ cultures into both institutions and quotidian professional work (Overall, 2009). Cultural competence pivots around empathy and compassion, proactive and continuous learning, critical reflexivity, and the empowerment of diverse communities (Cooke & Jacobs, 2018; Hughes-Hassell & Vance, 2016; Jaeger et al., 2015).

Cultural competence, however, remains challenging to inculcate. One study of students at Syracuse and Wayne State Universities (22% response rate) found that, by and large, coursework and class interactions not only failed to augment students’ cultural competence, but in some cases even lessened it (Kumasi & Hill, 2011). The authors recommended developing cultural competence standards and integrating them overtly into the curriculum.

Building upon this scholarship, Hill and Kumasi (2012) conducted a gap analysis of those Syracuse and Wayne State students concentrating on school library and youth services, namely whether these students felt their curricula had developed their cultural competency. The authors measured cultural competence in terms of self-awareness (recognizing the importance of culture in one's life and the lives of others), education (the ability to integrate members of diverse groups into service, work, and institutions), and interaction (understanding and respecting cultural backgrounds through mutual engagement). As the 27 respondents reported having only low to moderate knowledge gains in their level of cultural competence, Hill and Kumasi (2012) buttressed their earlier (2011) argument. They favored more fully integrating cultural competence into the LIS curriculum, an argument to which they soon returned (Kumasi & Hill, 2013).

Similarly, Cooke and her colleagues (2016) charged stakeholders to develop cultural competence by embracing interdisciplinarity and critical theory, and Cooke (2018) recommended cultural competency training for faculty. Cultural competence, concluded Engseth (2018), promotes humility and self-reflection in service of equity and inclusivity. Despite differing methodological approaches, then, scholars point to the need for more effective cultural competence training in and integration into the LIS curriculum.

Cultural competence, social justice, and demographics spill over into discussions about recruitment and retention and about how best to instantiate DEI in the curriculum.

Scholarly foci

Central concerns include recruitment and retention of LIS students and faculty from underrepresented populations, and pedagogy that foregrounds DEI.

Recruitment and retention

Interpersonal similarity may facilitate communication, encourage a sense of belonging, and nurture trusting relationships (Kim & Sin, 2008; Mor Barak, Cherin, & Berkman, 1998). Recruitment and retention of both students and faculty are therefore fundamental to LIS DEI.

Faculty recruitment and retention

Spurred by the Civil Rights Act of 1964, LIS educators and scholars subsequently broached recruitment and retention challenges (Totten, 1977). Totten (1992) favored targeted minority faculty recruitment.² He recommended tapping into faculty members' existing networks, inviting junior scholars in to deliver guest lectures, utilizing personal contacts in the field, and liaising with fellowship programs. Retention posed similar challenges, since faculty of color served as mediators, interpreters, and role models for minority students but often saw their efforts undervalued, if not slighted, in terms of tenure and promotion.

Like Totten, Josey (1993) enjoined LIS programs not only to recruit faculty of color but also to frame diversity as a national imperative. He concluded, "It is not enough for faculty search committees to lower their qualifications for candidates who are persons of color. At the same time, they cannot come back to the faculty and say that 'We have tried, but we have not found any'—they must have the evidence of what they have done and where they have looked" (p. 306). Programs, he argued, needed to be held accountable in their recruiting practices.

Discussing faculty retention, [Alire \(2001\)](#) also pointed to isolation both academic and social on campus and in the surrounding community, a lack of mentoring, invidious stereotypes, the pressure to represent all minorities, and obstacles to promotion and tenure. A decade later, [Wheeler \(2012\)](#) found the situation little better. Reprising Alire, he identified the challenge of finding senior professors of color to serve as mentors to junior faculty of color. Echoing [Totten \(1992\)](#), moreover, Wheeler suggested that faculty of color faced extra responsibilities, namely serving as role models, advisors, counselors, and advocates for students of color. As a result, they might demonstrate their value most in service, an area generally seen as lower priority than scholarship or teaching, and thus face an obtuse “old network” when seeking tenure or promotion (p. 164). Student recruitment and retention appeared similarly daunting.

Student recruitment and retention

As [Durr \(2012\)](#) reflected poignantly, “the hardest part of attending college and graduate school was and still is looking around my classes and noticing very few faces that resembled my own” (p. 158). Students likely gravitate toward programs—and by extension, to workplaces—not only where faculty look like them and relate to their experiences but also where the curriculum includes germane topics ([Subramaniam & Jaeger, 2010](#)).

Exploring student recruitment, [Totten \(1977\)](#) underlined the overwhelming importance of financial assistance (73.8 percent of his sample found this decisive in choosing a program). He also stressed the importance of buy-in from students, faculty, and administrators alike.

[Carter \(1978\)](#) meanwhile deemed it “truly a Herculean task” to recruit students (p. 295). She identified three barriers: financial, educational (traditional qualifications such as grade point average, institution attended, and GRE scores), and psychosocial (a lack of role models, professorial or parental support, preparation, and personal confidence). Notably, she thought faculty unduly reluctant not only to alter traditional admissions criteria but also to sanction alternative approaches to librarianship; Carter remained skeptical that diversity constituted a high recruitment priority. She urged recruitment backed up by designated resource allocations and recommended that stakeholders both encourage minorities to view librarianship as relevant and rewarding and to embed sustainable minority inclusion in LIS programs.

Subsequently, [Knowles and Jolivet \(1991\)](#) lobbied for collaborative recruitment of students from underrepresented populations by practitioners and educators. They favored publicity campaigns, designated funding, and support systems for improved retention rates. In similar spirit, [Abdullahi \(1992\)](#) also proselytized for a comprehensive recruitment program that included a recruitment action plan, an awareness program, a funding program, support services in aid of retention, and mentoring.

Building upon his previous argument ([Josey, 1989](#)), [Josey \(1993\)](#) called for proactive intervention and regular follow-up to retain diverse students. First, he recommended designated funding support for students. Second, he encouraged students themselves to establish or join both general student organizations and specific minority organizations. Like Josey, [Gollop \(1999\)](#) suggested ramped-up faculty and student recruitment; she also addressed the imperative of student retention at both the Master’s and PhD levels, a point echoed by [Jaeger & Franklin \(2007\)](#).

McGinn (2001, 2002) focused specifically on African American student recruitment and retention in LIS programs, an especially vital area, since Peterson (1996) had noted, “The history of library education for blacks in the United States is a history of admission denials” (p. 167). Black students, McGinn (2001) asserted, had perspectives lacking parallels in white culture; moreover, they dealt with omnipresent racism. Hence student support services such as safety, transportation, child care, housing, worship, personal care needs (such as hair care and makeup), and food services demanded attention. McGinn (2002) advocated for support services for African American students as well, namely a Minority Student Concerns Committee and the hiring of an African American “grandmother” figure from the local community.

Subsequent literature indicated the obduracy of barriers to student recruitment and retention. These barriers included librarianship’s poor public image; low salaries; career competition from other fields and disciplines; lack of minority faculty, students, and professionals to serve as recruiters, mentors, and mediators; a homogeneous curriculum; meager financial support; a paucity of concerted recruitment efforts; geographic considerations; and racism (Dunkley & McCook, 2005; Jaeger & Franklin, 2007; Kim & Sin, 2008; Mestre, 2010; Neely, 2005; Subramaniam & Jaeger, 2010).

More than four decades after the Civil Rights Act, the two largest minority groups in the United States, African Americans and Hispanics, remained the two most underrepresented among LIS faculty and professionals alike (Jaeger & Franklin, 2007). The American Library Association’s Spectrum,³ the Association of Research Library’s Leadership and Career Development Program and its Initiative to Recruit a Diverse Workforce, individual institutions’ scholarships (e.g. University of Arizona,⁴ University of Illinois, and University of Maryland), grant-supported recruitment programs both regional and national, and curriculum reform—despite this raft of initiatives, student recruitment progress seemed nominal (Kim & Sin, 2008).

Empirical studies shored up these assertions. Kim et al. (2007) surveyed 182 current students and alumni of color. Optimal recruitment strategies included assistantships/scholarships/financial aid (endorsed by 82.3% of respondents), role models (69.6%), faculty diversity (64.6%), faculty and staff of color’s involvement in the recruitment process (63.3%), and work opportunities (53.2%). Adding a further challenge, members of underrepresented groups evinced different recruitment preferences (Kim et al., 2007). For instance, more Native Americans valued a distance learning option and the presence of alumni of color in recruitment efforts. By contrast, more Hispanics and Asians preferred anti-discrimination committees and diversity promotion overall in LIS programs. Finally, more African Americans favored the introduction of LIS opportunities in high-school and undergraduate settings. Kim et al. (2007) also urged LIS programs to recruit students from the undergraduate and paraprofessional ranks more broadly.

In a related study, Kim and Sin (2008) surveyed 185 librarians of color (both LIS program graduates and current students) on student recruitment and retention preferences. An equal percentage of respondents (34%) expressed satisfaction and dissatisfaction with recruitment strategies. In terms of retention, meanwhile, 34% felt dissatisfied and 28% satisfied. The three most important student recruitment strategies for these respondents comprised financial support (assistantships, scholarships, and financial aid) and work or

career opportunities and services, diversity in recruiting personnel (involvement by faculty, staff, and alumni of color), and active recruitment (media advertising, and active solicitation and personal contacts from LIS programs' personnel) (Kim & Sin, 2008).

Propitiously, Kim and Sin's (2008) respondents also favored three student retention strategies that aligned with those for recruitment: financial support and work and career opportunities (assistantships/scholarships/financial aid, work opportunities, and career services/job placement), sensitive faculty and staff (mentoring programs, academic and career advising, partnerships between LIS programs and ethnic associations, and support groups/systems in programs), and a flexible curriculum and class schedule that incorporated diversity-related topics. Once more, Kim and Sin sussed out differences among ethnic groups, perhaps most notably the overall dissatisfaction of Hispanics.

Overall, Kim and Sin (2008) labeled recruitment and retention strategies inauspicious. They advocated a comprehensive, targeted recruiting and retention strategy including advertising, financial aid, faculty and curricular diversity, role models, mentoring, collaboration with libraries, general awareness and sensitivity to diversity, personal contacts, and internships, fieldwork, and practica.

Roy (2015) revisited Carter (1978) and concluded that change had been glacial, even though, paradoxically, she described considerable support for diversity evident among LIS faculty and members of professional organizations. Student recruitment remained a nearly insuperable obstacle given starting salaries; funds for diversity initiatives usually came from grant-based federal programs, ensuring sustainability challenges; traditional educational metrics (four-year college degrees, GPAs, and GRE scores) still guided admissions processes; role models were scarce and mentoring anemic; and the pipeline into LIS for undergraduates remained inchoate at best.

Also scrutinizing student recruitment, Dali and Caidi (2016) examined 57 ALA-accredited programs in the United States and Canada. They focused on two groups: those who had immigrated to North America at age 16 or older, and visible minorities or members of Aboriginal populations who were born in North America or who had immigrated to North America at age 15 or younger. Their 118 respondents (representing 28 programs, a 49% response rate) pointed to the Web and to interpersonal interactions as the two most important channels in learning about LIS career opportunities and in choosing an LIS program. More granularly, respondents cited the reputation of the program and its faculty (24.1%), its geographic location (21.4%), and economic concerns (18.3%) as their top three reasons to choose a program. Given these findings, Dali and Caidi (2016) concluded—perhaps counterintuitively—that no pressing need existed for advertisements or recruitment promotions centering on those from underrepresented backgrounds. These individuals, they reasoned, relied upon the same information sources as the broader population. Nonetheless, they recommended more concentrated outreach efforts in both secondary and postsecondary educational institutions and in specific geographic locations.

Following Roy (2015) and Dali and Caidi (2015), a recent Institute of Museum and Library Services report broached student recruitment. It advocated for cohort-based diversity scholarship programs (such as ALA's Spectrum) for and targeted recruitment of people of color (e.g. paraprofessionals) (Sands et al., 2018). Reiterating Kim et al. (2007) and Kim and Sin (2008), IMLS deemed student retention a key problem, too. Familiar barriers such as

the low pay of librarianship, LIS programs' cost, geographic considerations, the challenges of online learning, and the lack of RA or TA positions for online learners—all ranked in 2018 (Sands et al., 2018).

Targeted student and faculty recruitment and retention is foundational in the making of a diverse profession. Ongoing commitment, vigilance, incentives, mentoring, cohorts, funding, flexible learning options—all must be part of a robust coordinated LIS DEI education agenda. Pedagogy, of course, is also fundamental.

Teaching diversity

Considerable evidence indicates that diversity in student and faculty composition promotes educational outcomes such as cognitive development and higher-order critical thinking (Black, Krahmer, & Allen, 2018). Despite such evidence, a chasm yawned between the overall mission of LIS programs, which embraced diversity, and their course offerings, which slighted it. On one hand, Josey's (1991) survey found that more than half (24 of 46, or 52.2%) of responding programs' mission statements invested in service to diverse populations. Chu (1995a) found even more programs committed to a multicultural curriculum (85% of the 48 that responded). Al-Qallaf and Mika (2013), too, found that nearly all programs (55 of 58, or 94.8%) they examined addressed diversity by purportedly training students to work in an increasingly diverse society, to serve the information needs of diverse users, to facilitate access to and use of information by diverse users, and to design systems and services for diverse users.

On the other hand, Gollop (1999) lamented LIS graduates' lack of preparation to work with diverse communities and stressed the need to refurbish LIS curricula. A decade later, Mestre (2010) surveyed 123 ARL academic librarians who worked on diversity-related issues (based on their job title), obtaining 44 responses (35.7%). Despite Gollop's urging, germane training and education appeared minimal among Mestre's sample. First, while three-quarters of programs offered a multicultural librarianship course, many of those courses focused narrowly on public libraries or on collection development for children and young adults. Complicating matters, second, students were not necessarily aware of these courses. Third, less than half (44%) of respondents said faculty integrated diversity into their course content. Overall, just over one-fifth (21.3%) felt prepared for a job in multicultural librarianship. By contrast, nearly 45% said they had felt somewhat prepared, and 27.7% said they had not felt prepared.

Given this paucity of curricular opportunities, it is not surprising that nearly two-thirds of Mestre's respondents (64%) had not intended to seek a job related to multicultural services. More than a third (34.2%), in fact, took jobs for which they lacked all the enumerated qualifications. Most training for respondents happened on the job, therefore, but they found securing advice challenging.

Like Mestre, Al-Qallaf and Mika (2013) also highlighted the gap between LIS programs' professional preparation and expectation. Of the 870 (92.6%) LIS job advertisements they analyzed, 806 mentioned cultural diversity or multiculturalism. More specifically, just over half (440, or 50.6%) mentioned qualifications related to multicultural knowledge or experience and the ability to work with various ethnic groups. Of these 440, the three most desired qualifications included experience working in multicultural settings (29.6%),

specific skills and abilities (28%), and the ability to work with others from diverse cultural backgrounds (23%). Oddly, only 6.6% explicitly encouraged people of color to apply.

Flying in the face of the manifest need discerned by scholars such as Al-Qallaf and Mika (2013), Mestre (2010), Gollop (1999), Chu (1995a), and Josey (1991), as of the mid-2010s a majority of LIS students completed graduate training without completing a diversity-themed course (Jaeger et al., 2015). No wonder, then, that newly minted information professionals seemed unprepared to serve demographically diverse communities (Lee et al., 2015). A fundamental question persisted: how to infuse diversity into the curriculum.

Integrating diversity into the curriculum

Traditional LIS curricula neglected minority perspectives and topics of particular concern to underrepresented groups such as social justice, racism, and cultural diversity (Montiel-Overall & Littletree, 2010). But, like hooks (1994), Roy (2015) argued that curriculum design represented the most promising area for expanding and enriching diversity coverage.

As early as 1971, Monroe wondered whether diversity should be integrated into required and elective courses or confined to individual courses. Cohen (1980b) and Cohen and Sherrill (1982) advocated for a fully integrated curriculum, as did Belay (1992) and Chu (1995a).

More specifically, Freiband (1992) recommended both including members of underrepresented groups in curriculum development and disseminating successful curriculum models. She suggested sundry interventions: a joint degree (LIS and ethnic studies), an LIS degree specialization in services to minorities, designated courses, course readings authored by minority scholars, student projects, papers, and independent studies (e.g. internships, fieldwork, and practica) centered on minority concerns, adjunct faculty, guest speakers, workshops, seminars, colloquia, lectures, informal talks, continuing education opportunities, and even distance learning via alternative physical learning sites. As a complement to such interventions, she deemed essential the integration of multicultural and multilingual perspectives into required courses.

Peterson (1994) also advocated weaving diversity into multiple existing courses. She proposed guest lecturers, broadened coverage in lecture topics and separate lectures on information sources and services for specific marginalized groups, gender- and racially inclusive practice reference questions, and role-playing, self-assessment, and open discussions.

Plugging a more holistic approach, Chu (1995b) concentrated on programs' mission statements, institutional leadership, and strategic planning. Under these auspices, interventions included human (recruitment, hiring, retention, and promotion), financial, and material resources, student diversification, achievement and degree attainment of students (curricular revamping, academic support programs such as mentoring and advising, and both educational and pedagogical practices), and environmental (extracurricular and social) support.

Although only a quarter (25.5%) of Mestre's (2010) sample of ARL librarians favored required diversity courses, two-fifths (40.4%) favored adding diversity components to all courses. Mestre's respondents recommended cultural awareness of ethnic groups; cross-cultural communication skills and sensitivity training; knowledge of major area/ethnic studies

collections, of bibliographic tools, and of professional conferences; language skills; training programs; and the ability to lead committees and programming efforts and to manage work. Mestre echoed [Freiband \(1992\)](#) and [Peterson \(1994\)](#); she suggested a concerted and coordinated effort to include diverse guest speakers, multimedia tools, and readings.

Also favoring a multifaceted strategy, [Subramaniam and Jaeger \(2010; 2011\)](#) urged LIS programs to offer customized diversity courses and specializations, courses covering a broad range of diversity topics, internships and field experiences, and opportunities for students to conduct research with minority faculty from other institutions.

Nearly three-fifths (58%; 22 of 38) of [Mehra et al.'s \(2011\)](#) respondents contended that diversity belonged in all courses. Their participants integrated diversity into their own courses through readings (81%, or 29 of 36), discussion (72%, or 26 of 36), topics in assignments (67%, or 24 of 36), designated units on diversity (50%, or 18 of 36), and assignments (47%, or 17 of 36). Respondents thought diversity most salient in courses concerning organization of information (54%, or 21 of 39), history/philosophy/principles of LIS (63%, or 19 of 30), and management (63%, or 19 of 30). They recommended integrating diversity into courses through readings (87%, or 33 of 38), discussion (79%, or 30 of 38), assignments (71%, or 27 of 38), examples (71%, or 27 of 38), and case studies (68%, or 26 of 38).

Based on these findings, [Mehra et al. \(2011\)](#) advocated for a systematic approach both online and face-to-face. They argued for bringing theory and practice together, forging ties with local communities of color, developing diversity integration accreditation standards, provoking conversations formally and informally, addressing existing concerns of students and faculty, and reckoning with institutional politics and climates.

Like the preponderance of [Mehra et al.'s](#) participants, those in [Al-Qallaf and Mika's \(2013\)](#) study preferred to integrate diversity into all courses instead of pigeonholing diversity into a single designated course, a point [Jardine \(2016\)](#) echoed. In this vein, [Noble et al. \(2014\)](#) contended that treating diversity in one-off courses or units "others" members of the represented identity groups as well as the scholars who conduct critical LIS research. As an elective, [Noble et al.'s \(2014\)](#) "Race, Gender, and Sexuality in the Information Professions," like nearly all others offered in LIS programs, permitted the most privileged students to opt out.

Concurring with [Al-Qallaf and Mika, Kumasi and Manlove \(2015\)](#) introduced specific measures for integrating diversity in all courses. Based on their survey (100 persons invited; 27 usable responses), they advocated for three types of "diversity levers." First, explicit diversity levers, those straightforward to integrate into the curriculum, included ethics and values, advocacy and outreach, and access and service. Second, emergent diversity levers merited renewed attention; they included information technology. Third, implicit diversity levers remained underdeveloped; they included cataloging and knowledge organization and research methods.

In accord with previous scholars, [Cooke et al. \(2016\)](#) lobbied for institution-wide initiatives to bolster cultural competence, to increase exposure to interdisciplinary theory, and to encourage better understanding race's imprint on professional worldviews and practices. Like Cooke and her colleagues, [Caidi and Dali \(2017\)](#) sought to make diversity foundational in the curriculum, decision making, professional choices, interpersonal relationships, and

work environments. Their notion of “diversity by design” comprised instructor awareness (e.g., readings, assignments, class discussion, guests), administration, faculty, and student buy-in, community liaison work, diverse educational and technological resources and technological platforms, and a so-called diversity mindset.

Helkenberg et al. (2018) insisted that effective diversity education depended upon its full presence in the core curriculum, and Cooke’s (2018) interviewees (eight females and one male; four persons of color) concurred: Diversity-related coursework not only should be required, as Cohen (1980a) contended, but also should be embedded across the curriculum. In short, an optimal approach involves both designated courses and curriculum-wide coverage that spans required and elective courses as well as extracurricular activities and opportunities. As Subramaniam and Jaeger (2010, 2011) reasoned, the more interventions, the better.⁵ Jaeger, Bertot, and Subramaniam (2013b) exhorted LIS programs to embrace an experimental mentality—even productive failure—to this end. Critical pedagogy is an essential vehicle for making such interventions.

Critical pedagogy exemplars

Critical pedagogy embraces overarching as well as course-specific DEI approaches.

Overarching frameworks

Culturally competent communication, civic engagement, counterstories, Practitioner Inquiry, and culturally responsive pedagogy represent promising curriculum frameworks.

First, Rodriguez-Mori (in Lee et al., 2015) noted that interpersonal interactions hinged on cultural factors. These in turn imprinted the ways in which individuals from diverse groups communicate. LIS students must be prepared to serve diverse users; they needed to develop cultural communication competencies to do so. Second, Roy (in Lee et al., 2015) proselytized for civic engagement in LIS education as a means of advancing diversity. Civic engagement fostered collaborative work between students and faculty and enriched the learning experience for both. Third, Cooke (2016) encouraged LIS instructors holistically to represent marginalized perspectives through counterstories. Indebted to Critical Race Theory (CRT), counterstories troubled hegemonic narratives and behaviors. They included stock (public and mainstream), concealed (non-mainstream struggles), resistance (focused on overcoming or mere survival), and emerging or transforming stories (new stories building on the previous three types and rupturing the status quo). Cooke prescribed that LIS instructors integrate more heavily the latter two types into their courses.

Fourth, just as Cooke focused on a broad pedagogical approach, so did Irvin (2016) introduce Practitioner Inquiry (PI), a critical theory–indebted strategy annealing professional development, continuing education, and lifelong learning in service of greater self-awareness, self-empathy, and self-care. PI embraced critical pedagogy, not least by questioning the normative notion of instructor knowledge as fundamental learning framework. “With practitioner inquiry for LIS educators,” she summed up, “the professional becomes personal, the practical becomes profound, and the familiar becomes strange” (Irvin, 2016, p. 155). Fifth, building still further upon her previous work, Cooke (2018) promulgated culturally responsive pedagogy. Such an approach centered the collective as opposed to the

individual and thus extended critical pedagogy. Culturally sustaining pedagogy meanwhile enhanced culturally responsive pedagogy; it involved catering to learners' diverse cultural and linguistic identities and eschewing white middle-class epistemologies.

Exemplary courses

In addition to recommending curriculum changes, scholars explored implementation of DEI-related courses in the context of democratized intellectual inquiry, that is, critical pedagogy (Freire, 2000; hooks, 1994). "Critical theory enables us to take an inward look at LIS and align our goals and outcomes with the societal influences that inevitably touch our profession," Jaeger et al. (2015, p. 152) clarified.

As early as 2006, Pawley advocated for critical pedagogy to supplant didacticism in LIS. In like mind, Noble, Austin, Sweeney, McKeever, and Sullivan (2014) and Roberts and Noble (2016) lamented LIS curricula's tendency to elevate technical knowledge and practical skills at the expense of diversity and social justice work. Kumasi and Manlove (2015), too, argued for critical pedagogy encompassing various cultural perspectives. They recommended dissecting privilege and power to promote inclusion and reform.

Scholars highlighted the importance of robust diversity curricula based on thoughtful, reflexive, and rigorous intellectual inquiry. Exemplary courses focused on issues such as equitable information and technology availability and access for marginalized populations (Montiel-Overall & Littletree, 2010; Overall, 2010); service learning and community engagement (Chu, 2009; Gilliland, 2014; Lau et al., 2012); gender as a vehicle for interrogating essentialist epistemologies such as rationalism and empiricism (Fox, 2014); the lived experience of marginalized peoples with respect to information use, technology, and information tools and services design (Cooke et al., 2016; Noble et al., 2014); diversity, equity, and inclusion as ethical issues (e.g., professional codes of ethics, values embedded in technologies such as privacy and accessibility, and through ethical frameworks); information as a human right (e.g., Internet access, digital literacy, and digital inclusion) (Cooke et al., 2016; Cooke & Minarik, 2016; Jaeger et al., 2015); digital storytelling for marginalized populations such as Native Americans and Latinx people (Alcalá et al., 2016); and the embeddedness of racism and ethnocentrism in knowledge organization (Adler & Harper, 2018).

Topics addressed in these courses included, among others, ableism; adultism; ageism; classism; racism; rankism; religious oppression; sexism; heterosexism; homophobia; socio-economic status; segregation; incarceration; ideology, political, social, and technological divides; information poverty; immigration; homelessness; stereotypes; microaggressions; fairness; unexamined privilege and status; Critical Race Theory; cultural competence; and indigenization and decolonization. The benefits of critical pedagogy as shown by these single courses should encourage educators not only to offer more courses but also to instill more content instilled in the curriculum overall.

Obstacles

Despite the propitious examples of critical pedagogy noted above, four challenges to diversifying the LIS curriculum merit mention: logistical impediments, diversity coverage, student-related issues, and faculty roles and responsibilities.

Logistical challenges

Logistical challenges complicate reworking curricula. Problems included already surfeited curricula, potentially recalcitrant faculty, the expense of developing and offering new courses, the slow pace of bureaucratic change, and the resistance of social justice to the quantitative assessment favored by most programs (Gollop, 1999; Peterson, 2005; Rioux, 2016). Despite these obstacles, Peterson (2005) insisted that curriculum reform efforts channeled directly into professional practice. Indeed, diversity issues illuminate the social and political settings in which LIS work takes place. The earlier LIS programs address these issues, then, the better prepared graduates will be.

Diversity coverage

Not only their frequency of offering and their tendency to be electives, but also the diversity attributes covered in courses merit scrutiny. First, Subramaniam and Jaeger (2010) culled course descriptions from 14 iSchools that either supported diversity programs or provided support for doctoral students via NSF or IMLS funding between 2000 and 2009. Culture and race/ethnicity constituted the most popular diversity themes. Others included gender, language, access to technology, serving communities in particular geographical locations, communities with special needs, and disadvantaged or underserved populations. Course descriptions gave less emphasis to age, disability, sexual orientation, political ideology, literacy, and religion. Second, in a study of 47 syllabi from 14 iSchools' courses, Subramaniam and Jaeger (2011) discerned 12 facets of diversity in course syllabi. The most common three were age, race/ethnicity, and access to technology. Language/literacy, sexual orientation, and international issues appeared, albeit infrequently; still others such as religion and socioeconomic status appeared scarcely at all. Their narrow definition of diversity aside, more than 75% of the 47 diversity-related courses focused on libraries, thus effectively pigeonholing diversity-related issues. Third, even courses ostensibly addressing diversity issues may fall short in their coverage. Cooke and Jacobs's (2018) curriculum audit (108 courses) found nearly half (50 of 108, or 46%) of syllabi inadequate; 23 (21%) contained diverse content; and 35 others (32%) contained some diverse content. As these studies suggested, existing diversity courses centered on relatively few diversity criteria and institutional or organizational contexts.

Student-related challenges

In addition to course coverage and logistical challenges, scholars identify five student-related challenges to enhanced DEI: self-selection, resistance, communication, productive discomfort, and faculty roles and responsibilities.

Self-selection

Not only the lack of courses related to diversity, but also the sidelining of those offered remains a longstanding concern of scholars. Setting the tone, Gollop (1999) noted that such courses were generally electives and therefore attracted students predisposed to these areas. Mestre (2010) found much the same story a decade later, namely, few courses and self-selecting students. In one content analysis, Subramaniam and Jaeger (2010) determined

that iSchools required less than 10% (6 of 61) of diversity-related courses (only 4.9% were at the doctoral level, moreover, hampering the preparation of future faculty members). In a related study, [Subramaniam and Jaeger \(2011\)](#) determined that only 6.4% (three of 47) courses were required and only 6.4% were at the doctoral level. Relegating courses to electives, they asserted, likely resulted in students being unaware of them, the courses being offered infrequently, or both.

Striking a more optimistic note than [Subramaniam and Jaeger \(2010, 2011\)](#), [Bonnici, Maatta, Wells, Brodsky, and Meadows et al \(2012\)](#) pointed to the appreciable inclusion of race, ethnicity, and gender perspectives in the LIS curriculum. They found that 49 ALA-accredited programs offered 99 diversity-related courses. Twenty-five programs offered at least one course that addressed physiological challenges, 19 offered at least one that addressed diversity, and 12 programs offered at least one that addressed both. Similarly optimistic, [Al-Qallaf and Mika \(2013\)](#) determined that 47 of 58 LIS programs (81%) offered at least one course focused on multiculturalism, diversity, or international issues, a total of 146 courses—albeit all electives. They saw considerable support for research on social change and judged LIS programs' stance toward diversity increasingly encouraging.

Conversely, [Cooke \(2017\)](#) found only 68 courses related to diversity and social justice scattered across the 58 ALA-accredited programs as of the summer of 2015. She (2016) expressed consternation at the lack of relevant courses and blamed the paucity of diverse faculty members. But while lack of coverage as suggested by [Cooke \(2017\)](#) is conspicuous, outright resistance is more troubling.

Resistance

[Peterson \(1994\)](#) discerned resistance to diversity-related content; some students saw it as “mind control” or “indoctrination,” especially if taught by a “diversifier” (p. 33). Some students even engaged in hate speech under the aegis of intellectual freedom.⁶ [Winston \(2001a, 2005\)](#) found similar resistance, namely that students thought diversity issues relevant only to members of underrepresented groups.

Student ambivalence shone through again more than a decade later, as [Lau et al.'s \(2012\)](#) student evaluations indicated. Some students claimed the class lacked rigor or that diversity was otiose; others objected to compulsory service learning, to doing what they saw as menial tasks, or to shoehorning projects into a 10-week quarter. Only a bare majority (51%) of students thought the course useful. One instructor wrote of the challenge of getting nonminority students to take meaningful ownership of the course ([Gilliland, 2014](#)). Finally, [Noble et al.'s \(2014\)](#) “Race, Gender, and Sexuality in the Information Professions” course ran afoul of some students' expectations; the latter bristled at theory, preferring instead a more traditional, dogmatic, and practical pedagogy.

Communication

Clear communication may prove challenging. For example, online education may attract a more diverse student body, but it sacrifices physical cues ([Mehra et al., 2011](#)). What is more, the online environment can undercut efforts to identify bias ([Jaeger et al., 2015](#)). More holistically, [Adkins et al. \(2015\)](#) saw a peculiar disconnect: “Students may not realize that they

are learning about diversity, even when LIS faculty think they are teaching about diversity” (p. 143). In their study, LIS programs (and LIS associations) assumed a comparatively minor role. Rather, life experience (91%), work experience (85%), news (65%) and popular media (54%), and articles and books specific to library diversity (51%) all outstripped LIS programs (46%) in importance. Developing cultural communication competencies in the classroom, as Rodriguez-Mori (in Lee et al., 2015) contends, are therefore crucial.

Productive discomfort

Even clear communication may elicit recalcitrance, however. Student- and faculty-based resistance to change also takes root in longstanding societal discomfort with discussing diversity candidly. While hooks (1994) challenged her students in ways they found “deeply unsettling” (p. 206), Winston (2001a, 2005), for one, noted an overriding tendency for LIS faculty to shy away from diversity for this very reason. Like hooks, Noble et al. (2014), Jaeger et al. (2015), Hughes-Hassell and Vance (2016), Cooke and Minarik (2016), and Caidi and Dali (2017) insisted on the necessity of difficult, unfamiliar, and even uncomfortable conversations. Students needed continuous reinforcement, especially online, they asserted. Given this need for self-reflection and self-assessment, Cooke and Minarik (2016) offered students the option of dropping the class without penalty.

Despite these sentiments, Cooke et al. (2016) recommended that faculty frame diversity and social justice topics ecumenically to students. Indeed, successful implementation of DEI initiatives depends upon faculty focusing learning community discussions on just these key issues.

Faculty roles and responsibilities

Few faculty concentrate their research on DEI, but pedagogical diversification likely depends upon their investment (Irvin, 2016; Jaeger et al., 2011; Mestre, 2010). For example, Dunkley and McCook (2005) suggested that faculty of color’s mentoring of students of color would lead to an increase in the number of librarians of color. In like mind, Pawley (2006) favored allying with current and recruiting new faculty invested in social justice. Abdullahi (2007) called for LIS faculty to support and affirm students from diverse backgrounds, to push for greater educational equity, and to embrace culturally responsive teaching practices.

One 2011 study explored the views of 38 instructors working at 16 LIS programs that offered degrees fully online (people of color and women were overrepresented). Nearly three-quarters (74%, or 28 of 38) said that including diversity in the curriculum was either “very important” or “absolutely essential” (Mehra et al., 2011).

Both Irvin (2016) and Roberts and Noble (2016) called for engaged academics to conduct research on and to offer courses in social justice areas. Faculty advocacy—perhaps in tandem with student support—must drive change, Roberts and Noble contested, reasoning that neither organic nor top-down momentum would otherwise accrue. Faculty must model open-minded behavior (Jaeger et al., 2015); as Caswell (2017) elaborated, “As a white woman, I have a responsibility to use my privilege to dismantle white supremacy and . . . model white antiracist behavior” (p. 224). At the same time, she conceded, it remains risky to discuss racial oppression in class, especially for untenured faculty and faculty of color.

Indeed, the latter already shouldered the bulk of diversity-related service roles that white faculty members often evaded (Cooke et al., 2016).

Faculty—whether from overrepresented or underrepresented groups—likely needed training themselves. They faced “a basic conundrum of how to be inclusive without either minimizing one group’s experience with oppression over another group’s experience, or creating a binary between whites and non-whites that can reinforce a hierarchy of white supremacy and further objectify and pathologize non-whites” (Kumasi, 2016, p. 207). Notably, most of Cooke’s (2018) participants endorsed cultural competence training and training in facilitating discussion and intergroup dialogue for faculty, particularly for those teaching online. Diversity efforts must enlist stakeholders beyond faculty members, too. Wheeler (2005) tasked non-faculty members such as upper administrators with both leadership of and support for diversity initiatives. He advised them not to challenge faculty members’ subject expertise and to opt for rather than sticks, namely by fostering supportive institutional environments and providing adequate resources.

Faculty roles and responsibilities, productive discomfort, clear communication, student resistance, and self-selection—all constitute formidable obstacles that must be addressed frontally for optimal DEI education to occur.

Future research

As early as 1994, Welburn pointed out the dearth of LIS scholarship on diversity, an observation reiterated frequently (Jaeger, Bertot, & Franklin, 2010; Jaeger et al., 2013b; Jardine, 2016; Kumasi & Manlove, 2015; Winston, 2001a).

Future research might profitably tackle eight questions. First, harkening to hooks (1994) and Pawley (1998), how might stakeholders address socioeconomic class under the auspices of DEI and social justice? Second, students and faculty of color usually take on extra responsibility for social justice work while whites ignore it with impunity (Cooke et al., 2016). How can responsibilities be more equitably spread? Third, since institutional DEI initiatives neglect extracurricular activities that might probe structural racism or white privilege (Cooke et al., 2016), what extracurricular activities and groups might investigate these issues most fruitfully? Fourth, how can white educators appropriately and effectively model anti-racism in the classroom, whether physical or virtual? Similarly, how can instructors both facilitate and help students understand the need for uncomfortable conversations?

Fifth, given the apparently ineluctable neoliberal environment of higher education, how might advocates present diversity as an attractive business proposition (Bourdieu, 1998)? As the maxim goes, what gets measured may well be what gets managed. Following Winston (2001b), more work on the correlation between diversity and organizational success would be timely. Sixth, ALISE (2021) reported that 55% of programs offered 1,976 course sections off-campus in 2020. How might DEI be embedded optimally in the online curriculum? Seventh, LIS programs increasingly embrace data science and human-computer interaction and design thinking (Clarke, 2020; Marchionini, 2016). How might LIS programs bake DEI into these fields as they grow and mature? And finally, what is the optimal role for community-based learning in promoting diversity, equity, inclusion, and social justice (Poole, 2021; Poole et al., 2022)?

Conclusion

More than a quarter-century ago, [Josey \(1993\)](#) expressed optimism for the future of diversity in LIS. [Gollop \(1999\)](#) said mordantly, “Hope may spring eternal, but more often than not, progress occurs in fits and starts.” There remains an exigent need to “ignit[e] diversity” ([Lee et al., 2015](#)); as the ALA Task Force on Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (2016) enjoined, “our work is far from complete” (p. 13). Social justice work must recruit the entire LIS community—associations, institutions, administrators, faculty, staff, and students. Such work, moreover, must enlist not only those people already invested in social justice but also those who view themselves as unaffected by the issue or who even imperil their own privilege by engaging with it ([Cooke et al., 2016](#); [Noble et al., 2014](#)). We must establish mechanisms for accountability ([Josey, 1993](#)).

To this point, [Jaeger and Franklin \(2007\)](#) posit “a virtuous circle of inclusiveness”: diverse doctoral students lead to diverse faculties, which leads to culturally aware Master’s students, which leads to culturally aware library staff, which leads to inclusive services and diverse users (p. 20). The virtuous circle involves multiple simultaneous activities both individual and collective, for instance curriculum, recruiting, programming, service, outreach, organization, administration, and evaluation ([Cooke, 2016](#); [Jaeger et al., 2015](#)). Other fruitful interventions include pre-professional programs, Master’s- and doctoral-level education, continuing education, and faculty early career development ([Sands et al., 2018](#)). The more frequent the interventions, the better. As [Jaeger & Hill \(2017\)](#) enjoin, “Librarians, heal thyself” (p. 212).

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Notes

1. We searched the databases Library Literature & Information Science Full Texts, Library and Information Science and Technology Abstracts (LISTA), ProQuest One Academic, and JSTOR using terms such as multicult*, divers*, "social justice," "equity," "inclus*," and educat*.
2. Stressing the need for political sagacity, Totten (1992) cautioned, "The recruitment program must be sensitive to the possibility that bringing in a new faculty member at a salary that exceeds that of existing faculty members with similar professional qualifications can create an unfriendly atmosphere for the new minority faculty member" (p. 51).
3. Spectrum underlined that recruiting minority PhD students was essential for diversifying faculty; more than 800 Master's students and 18 PhD students had completed the fellowship (Cooke, 2014).
4. Intended as a national model, Knowledge River was established in 2002. It included funding (graduate assistantships), a residential cohort, coursework on diversity, real library work experiences, leadership skills development, and formal mentoring and advising by ethnic minorities. The program proved successful in retaining, graduating, and placing students (102 students, concluding 67 Latinx and 35 Native American, since 2002) (Montiel-Overall & Littletree, 2010).

5. Other favored pedagogical strategies included a user services–based scenario approach (Jeng, 1997); scenarios, case studies, and internships (Kim & Sin, 2008); and expanding the curricular role of languages such as Spanish (Trejo, 1977; Jaeger & Franklin, 2007).
6. As Caswell (2017) observes, “For white students, having to confront their privilege can be an uncomfortable exercise that can result in defensive reactions or worse; this heightened state of ‘white fragility’ is a component of white supremacy” (p. 226).