Strengthening the Virtuous Circle:
Why Diversity and Cultural Competence are Important to LIS
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Most of today's content can be found in the "Managing Diversity" chapter from: Cooke, N. A. (2016). *Information Services to Diverse Populations: Developing Culturally Competent Library Professionals.* ABC-CLIO.

Diversity Defined

- The state or fact of being diverse;
- Variety
- A point of difference
- The inclusion of individuals representing more than one national origin, color, religion, socioeconomic stratum, sexual orientation, ability level, etc.

Peterson, L. (1999). The definition of diversity: Two views. A more specific definition. Journal of library administration, 27(1-2), 17-26.

Culture Defined

- Set of customs, traditions, and values within a society/community
- The characteristics and knowledge of a particular group of people defined and influenced by such things as language, religion, social habits, cuisine, and styles of dress.

Social Justice Defined

The process of working toward, and the condition of, everyone's basic needs being met and everyone's potential fulfilled to live productive and empowered lives as participating citizens of our global community.

Traditionally Underserved Populations (ALA)

- Adult New and Non-Readers
- Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, and Transgender People
- Incarcerated People and Ex-Offenders

- Older Adults
- People of Color
- People with Disabilities
- Poor and Homeless People
- Rural, Native, and Tribal Libraries
- Bookmobile Communities

And don't forget:
- New Americans
- Veterans
- Mentally Ill
- ESL and Linguistically Diverse
- Religious Diversity
- Those Affected by the Digital Divide

What Diverse Populations do YOU serve?

Intersectionality

If we aren't intersectional, some of us, the most vulnerable, are going to fall through the cracks. Kimberlé Williams Crenshaw

Nicholas Winter's definition of intersectionality:
"Intersectionality refers to the ways that multiple dimensions of social stratification interact with each other to shape individual identity and experience…Intersectionality also refers to the ways that cultural images of race and gender interact. Many powerful political symbols exist at the intersection of race and gender (and other) categories, either explicitly or implicitly. Thus, for example, the "soccer mom" is defined explicitly by her gender but, equally important, she is also defined by her race (white) and class (suburban middle); the paradigmatic "violent black criminal" is not just racial but also has a specific gender (male) and age (young); the "welfare queen" is black, female, and poor. These sorts of images, and related rhetorical issue frames, need not draw only on racial schemas or gender schemas individually, but rather can draw on both simultaneously or on some more-specific schemas for the intersectional categories. When they do so, race and gender interact such that the impact of both is something more complex than the sum of the separate dimensions."

> Winter, N. J. (2008). *Dangerous frames: How ideas about race and gender shape public opinion*. University of Chicago Press.

[Diversity in Children's Literature Graphic](#)

Huyck, David, Sarah Park Dahlen, Molly Beth Griffin. (2016 September 14). Diversity in Children's Books 2015 infographic. sarahpark.com blog. Retrieved from https://readingspark.wordpress.com/2016/09/14/picture-this-reflecting-diversity-in-childrens-book-publishing/

[Diversity Counts Report](#)

The field continues to not reflect, and perhaps not fully understand, the communities it serves.

http://www.ala.org/offices/diversity/diversitycounts/divcounts

[Circles of My Multicultural Self: Identity and Stereotypes](#)

http://www.edchange.org/multicultural/activities/circlesofself.html

[Cultural Competence](#)

A process of empathy development, privilege recognition, and consciousness raising.

Chapter 2 (Cooke 2016) talks about this concept in depth:

> Cooke, N. A. (2016). *Information Services to Diverse Populations: Developing Culturally Competent Library Professionals.* ABC-CLIO.

Elements

- CULTURAL DESTRUCTIVENESS
    - Characterized by attitudes and practices that lead to the deterioration, elimination, and destruction of a cultural group and thus the individuals in that group.
- CULTURAL INCAPACITY
    - Occurs when individuals and organizations do not directly seek to destroy a cultural group but lack the capacity to serve or interest in serving various cultural groups.
- CULTURAL BLINDNESS
    - The refusal or inability to acknowledge uniqueness of cultures, views, etc.
- CULTURAL PRE-COMPETENCE
    - The awareness that the collection, services, and programs are lacking in diverse offerings; a desire to make a positive change to the situation.

- CULTURAL COMPETENCE
  - Characterized by an evident commitment to creating (or upholding) policies and practices that provide services to diverse patrons.
- CULTURAL PROFICIENCY
  - Advanced stage; mastery achieved.

"**Cultural humility** incorporates a lifelong commitment to self-evaluation and self-critique, to redressing the power imbalances in the ~~patient-physician~~ [patron-librarian] dynamic, and to developing mutually beneficial and non-paternalistic ~~clinical~~ [library] and advocacy partnerships with communities on behalf of individuals and defined populations."

A Culturally Competent Librarian / Library* Will:

1. Value diversity;
2. Have mechanisms in place to assess their level of cultural competence;
3. *Be headed by leaders who are conscious of the dynamics inherent when cultures interact;
4. Be committed to continuous acquisition of cultural knowledge; and,
5. Develop ways to adapt to and embrace diversity.

Ask Yourself

- Where are you on the cultural competence continuum? Where do you want to be?
- Where do think most people fall on the continuum?
- What can you as a LIS professional do to promote cultural competence?

Minorities in Librarianship: A Few of the Persistent Issues

Library professionals work with all kinds of diverse communities, and they need to reflect and consider critically what their service looks like. Are they prepared and able to work with people who don't look like them, or who come from different backgrounds? Librarianship may be notoriously white and female, but our communities are not.

Cooke, N. A. (2017, May 4). Tolerance Is Not Good Enough (BackTalk column). Retrieved June 17, 2017, from *Library Journal*, http://lj.libraryjournal.com/2017/05/opinion/backtalk/tolerance-is-not-good-enough-backtalk/#

LIS Microaggressions: http://lismicroaggressions.tumblr.com

Acknowledging The History In Order To Disrupt It

- Cooke, N. A. (2017). The GSLS Carnegie Scholars: Guests in Someone Else's House. Libraries: Culture, History, and Society, 1(1), 46-71.
- Wiegand, W. A. (2017). "Any Ideas?": The American Library Association and the Desegregation of Public Libraries in the American South. Libraries: Culture, History, and Society, 1(1), 1-22.
- Malone, C. K. (2000). Toward a multicultural American public library history. Libraries & Culture, 77-87.
- Dumont, R. R. (1986). The educating of black librarians: An historical perspective. Journal of education for library and information science, 233-249.

'You're Talked To As If You Are A Junior' – Employees On Workplace Racism:
https://www.theguardian.com/inequality/2017/sep/26/employees-on-workplace-racism-under-representation-bame

Maintaining The Status Quo While Appearing Progressive

- Diversity as "Happy talk"
- Diversity as Commodification
- Diversity as Image Management
- Papered Diversity
- Casualization of Commitment
- Institutional Passing

Ahmed, S. (2012). On being included: Racism and diversity in institutional life. Duke University Press.

The Virtuous Circle

Jaeger, P. T., & Franklin, R. E. (2007). The Virtuous Circle: Increasing Diversity in LIS Faculties to Create More Inclusive Library Services and Outreach. Education Libraries, 30(1), 20-26.

Our focus here is on culturally aware information professionals.
Having a personal pedagogy is part of this.

An Ivy League Professor on Why Colleges Don't Hire More Faculty of Color:
https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/grade-point/wp/2016/09/26/an-ivy-league-professor-on-why-colleges-dont-hire-more-faculty-of-color-we-dont-want-them/?utm_term=.914a3bfcc4fb

ASLC competencies: Commitment to Client Group
http://www.ala.org/alsc/edcareeers/alsccorecomps
- Demonstrates respect for diversity and inclusion of cultural values, and continually develops cultural awareness and understanding of self and others.
- Recognizes racism, ethnocentrism, classism, heterosexism, genderism, ableism, and other systems of discrimination and exclusion in the community and its institutions, including the library, and interrupts them by way of culturally competent services.
- Cultivates an environment for enjoyable and convenient use of library resources, specifically removing barriers to access presented by socioeconomic circumstances, culture, privilege, language, gender, ability, and other diversities.

Facilitating Hard Conversations
Sue, D. W. (2016). Race talk and the conspiracy of silence: Understanding and facilitating difficult dialogues on race. John Wiley & Sons.

Discussing Race, Racism, and other Difficult Topics with Students
http://www.tolerance.org/sites/default/files/general/Difficult_Conversations_Self_Assessment.pdf

Reflection and Planning

- What groups would you like to serve in your library? Why?
- What kinds of services do you see lacking in your library? How can you change that?
- How will you develop or improve your critical practice?
- How does this apply to your leadership skills?
- What steps do you need to take to reach the place(s) you want to be?
- What can you do on Monday to start making changes?