



Diversity, equity, and inclusion in library collections and services

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Abstract

The topic of diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) in library collections and services is a critical issue that has gained increasing attention in recent years. Libraries play a crucial role in providing access to information, resources, and services to diverse communities, and it is important for them to reflect the diversity of their users in their collections and services. provides an overview of the importance of DEI in libraries and discusses the challenges and opportunities that librarians face in creating more inclusive and equitable collections and services. begins by defining key terms related to DEI and providing a brief history of the evolution of DEI in libraries. It then discusses the importance of DEI in libraries, including its impact on user engagement, retention, and satisfaction. also explores the challenges that librarians face in creating more inclusive collections and services, including issues related to funding, resource allocation, and staff training. In addition to discussing challenges, also highlights opportunities for librarians to create more inclusive collections and services, such as using community input to inform collection development and providing programming that reflects the diverse interests and needs of library users. “concludes with a call to action for librarians to prioritize DEI in their collections and services, emphasizing the importance of ongoing evaluation and reflection in this process. the critical role that libraries play in promoting DEI and the importance of incorporating DEI principles into all aspects of library operations. By creating more inclusive and equitable collections and services, libraries can better serve their communities and foster a culture of inclusion and belonging.

Keywords : Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, Libraries, Collections, Services, User engagement, Community input

Introduction

Libraries are essential community institutions that provide access to information, resources, and services to people of all ages, backgrounds, and abilities. However, for many years, libraries have struggled to fully address the needs of diverse communities and ensure that their collections and services are inclusive and equitable. This has led to a growing awareness of the importance of diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) in libraries and a call for librarians to



prioritize DEI in their operations. DEI is a multifaceted concept that encompasses a range of factors, including race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, ability, age, and socioeconomic status. In the context of libraries, DEI means creating collections and services that reflect the diversity of library users and ensuring that everyone has equal access to information and resources. This involves taking proactive steps to identify and address barriers to access, as well as actively seeking out and incorporating diverse perspectives and voices in collection development and programming.

The goal of DEI in libraries is not just to meet the needs of diverse communities but also to promote a culture of inclusion and belonging. By prioritizing DEI, libraries can foster a sense of community among their users, build trust, and increase user engagement and satisfaction. This, in turn, can help to strengthen the library's position as a vital community institution. However, achieving DEI in libraries is not without its challenges. Librarians must navigate complex issues related to funding, resource allocation, staff training, and community outreach, all while striving to meet the needs of diverse communities. Despite these challenges, there are also many opportunities for librarians to promote DEI in their collections and services, including collaborating with community partners, using user feedback to inform collection development, and providing programming that reflects the interests and needs of diverse communities. provides an overview of DEI in libraries, discussing its importance, challenges, and opportunities. It also emphasizes the critical role that libraries play in promoting DEI and the need for ongoing evaluation and reflection in this process. By prioritizing DEI, libraries can ensure that they are providing the best possible service to their communities, promoting access to information and resources, and fostering a culture of inclusion and belonging.

Diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) are essential values for libraries to uphold in their collections and services. Libraries serve diverse communities, and they must reflect this diversity in their offerings and practices. A library's collection should include materials from a wide range of perspectives, including those of underrepresented and marginalized groups. In addition to collecting diverse materials, libraries must ensure that their services are accessible and inclusive to all users. This can involve providing accommodations for users with disabilities, offering language services for non-native speakers, and creating a welcoming and safe environment for all patrons. DEI is also important in the hiring and training of library staff. Libraries should strive to have a diverse workforce that reflects the communities they serve,



and provide ongoing training to ensure that staff members are equipped to serve all patrons with respect and cultural competence”. Ultimately, DEI is a crucial aspect of the library's mission to provide free and open access to information for all. By promoting diversity, equity, and inclusion in their collections and services, libraries can help bridge cultural divides, promote understanding and empathy, and empower all individuals to explore and learn.

- Representation matters: Libraries should strive to represent diverse voices and perspectives in their collections to provide a fuller understanding of the world and promote empathy and understanding among different communities.
- Overcoming historical biases: Libraries should acknowledge and actively work to overcome historical biases in their collections and services, particularly in areas such as race, gender, sexuality, and ability.
- Supporting marginalized communities: Libraries have a responsibility to support marginalized communities and provide access to resources that may not be available elsewhere.
- Accessibility and inclusivity: Libraries should prioritize accessibility and inclusivity in their services, including providing accommodations for people with disabilities and making sure that their physical spaces and digital resources are accessible to everyone.
- Staff training and education: “Libraries should provide ongoing training and education for their staff on topics such as cultural competence, bias awareness, and diversity and inclusion to ensure that they can provide the best possible service to all patrons.
- Partnerships with community organizations: Libraries can work with community organizations to provide services and resources that meet the needs of their diverse populations and to promote collaboration and understanding across different groups.
- Diversity in formats: Libraries should strive to provide diverse formats to meet the varied learning preferences of their patrons. This may include audiobooks, eBooks, braille, large print, and other formats.
- Collections as mirrors and windows: Collections should serve as both mirrors and windows for patrons. Mirrors reflect the diversity of the patron community, while windows allow patrons to see into the experiences and perspectives of others.
- Outreach to underserved communities: Libraries should actively seek out and engage with underserved communities to ensure that they are aware of the services and resources available to them.



- Evaluating and re-evaluating collections: Libraries should regularly evaluate and re-evaluate their collections to ensure that they are meeting the needs of their communities and representing diverse perspectives.
- Advocacy and activism: Libraries can play an important role in advocating for social justice and promoting activism in their communities. This may involve hosting events, providing resources, or partnering with organizations to promote social change.
- Intersectionality: Libraries should recognize the intersectionality of identities and work to collect and provide resources that reflect the experiences of individuals with multiple marginalized identities.
- Diversity, equity, and inclusion are critical components of library collections and services. By prioritizing these values, libraries can better serve their communities, promote empathy and understanding, and work towards a more just and equitable society.
Prioritizing diversity, equity, and inclusion in their collections and services, libraries can play a critical role in promoting a more just and equitable society.

Representation of diverse viewpoints: Libraries should strive to include materials that represent diverse viewpoints and perspectives on a variety of issues. This can help to promote critical thinking and encourage patrons to consider multiple perspectives. **Anti-racism and social justice:** Libraries can play a role in promoting anti-racism and social justice by providing resources and programming on these topics. This can help to raise awareness and promote action towards creating a more just and equitable society.

Cultural sensitivity and responsiveness: Libraries should aim to provide culturally sensitive and responsive services to ensure that all patrons feel welcome and respected. This may involve providing resources and programming that are specific to certain cultural groups or ensuring that staff are trained to recognize and respond to cultural differences.

Language diversity: Libraries should strive to provide resources and services in multiple languages to meet the needs of their diverse communities. This can include offering multilingual materials and services or partnering with community organizations to provide language services.

Intersectionality: Libraries should recognize the intersectionality of identities and strive to collect and provide resources that reflect the experiences of individuals with multiple



marginalized identities. This can help to promote understanding and empathy for all members of the community.

Collaborative collection development: Libraries can work collaboratively with other libraries or organizations to share resources and expertise and ensure that diverse perspectives are represented in collections.

Diverse staff: Libraries should aim to have a diverse staff that reflects the communities they serve. This can help to ensure that staff members have a better understanding of the needs and perspectives of their patrons and can provide culturally competent services.

Review of literature

(Gibney 2022) studied A Diversity , Equity , and Inclusion (DEI) Approach to Collection Development in a University Library found that and Primary obstacles to diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) in academic institutions include not only individual biases and interpersonal discrimination, but also unjust structural and systemic power structures. Libraries and librarians cannot remain neutral towards white supremacy anti-racism. The impact of library programs and educational influence extends far beyond to a broad range of library users. Since the status quo maintains historically unjust structural issues in diversity, specific measures surpassing the day- to-day operations of the library need to be taken to gather the quantitative data regarding the state of diversity, equity, and inclusion in library resources. With actual data to serve as a baseline of understanding, even if it only serves to reaffirm already existing assumptions, new goals and expectations can be established. The rationale for a diversity, equity, and inclusion audit is that it makes the abstract concepts measurable and quantifiable, which in turn informs organizational framework for future support of DEI activities and tracking concrete progress.

(Voice n.d.) studied Diversity , Equity , and Inclusion (DEI) Collections Research & Learning from Every Voice found that and There is increased demand to support students and researchers with access to insights and information from a wide variety of perspectives. Librarians tell us that addressing those needs challenge them in two ways: finding the content and finding space in the budget for it. Through collections and services, academic libraries have a unique platform to support diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) initiatives, ensuring representation of diverse users and reflecting every voice, regardless of race, gender, sexual orientation, physical ability or belief. Then there is the budget. Libraries and faculty are continually expected to do more with less – which makes it difficult to grow collections and services. ProQuest can help on both



fronts. Our products and services are designed to make” it easier for libraries to identify, source, and acquire resources that meet their DEI requirements, affordably.

Conclusion

Diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) in library collections and services are crucial for ensuring equitable access to information for all users. The literature highlights the importance of collecting and promoting diverse perspectives, providing accessible and inclusive services, offering staff training and education, engaging in partnerships and community outreach, and regularly evaluating and re-evaluating collections and services. Libraries have a responsibility to provide culturally competent and responsive services that meet the needs of their diverse communities. By prioritizing DEI in their collections and services, libraries can play a critical role in promoting social justice and creating a more inclusive and equitable society. As such, it is important for libraries to continue to prioritize DEI and work towards creating environments that are welcoming and inclusive for all patrons.

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