Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Anti-racism in Collection Development

"Cultural Diversity" or "Multiculturalism" refers to the harmonious co-existence and interaction of different cultures, where "culture should be regarded as the set of distinctive spiritual, material, intellectual and emotional features of society or a social group, and that it encompasses, in addition to art and literature; lifestyles, ways of living together, value systems, traditions and beliefs.

– IFLA/UNESCO Multicultural Library Manifesto, 2012

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BY POINTING OUT GLOBAL FORCES, SUCH AS 6,000 LANGUAGES IN THE WORLD, increasing international migration rates that result in complex identities, globalization, faster communication, ease of transportation, and other forces, the 2012 IFLA/UNESCO Multicultural Library Manifesto encourages the building of multicultural libraries. The manifesto's first two core actions (there's a total of five) to "develop culturally and linguistically diverse collections, including digital and multimedia resources; allocate resources for the preservation of cultural expression and heritage, paying particular attention to oral, indigenous and intangible cultural heritage" are

based on the 2005 UNESCO Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions. The 2005 Convention was a milestone in international cultural policy. Ratified by 150 UN member states, it affirms diversity as the heart of the creative economy. The cultural sector is now one of the fastest growing areas, making up 6.1% of the global economy, powering over 30 million jobs, and with an estimated global worth of $4.3 billion. The manifesto also includes a short guide for how individual libraries can participate.

The literature on libraries is filled with calls to build multicultural collections, but barriers exist. Globally, the digital divide, inequitable flows of information between countries, lack of trained staff, and funding are some of the challenges which the North American and Euro-centric discourse about diversity, equity, inclusion (DEI) and anti-racism often exacerbates. To ease some of these barriers, in this chapter definitions of DEI and anti-racism are first presented from an international perspective and then discussed with examples and best practices for library collection development. The goal is to empower librarians in low- and middle-income countries (LMICs) to identify priorities and develop best practices that would preserve local, Indigenous, and marginalized voices and make them more globally visible. Librarians everywhere will find it instructive.

Definitions

Definitions are adapted from the Anti-racism Digital Library (2022), which has a glossary of over 200 terms.

- Diversity encompasses different properties or characteristics that make one individual or group different from another.

- Equity is about dividing resources proportionally to achieve a fair outcome. Equity recognizes the important role played by the past in human capabilities and achievements in the present and for the future and seeks to address them fairly.

- Inclusion engages the community with practices that create an environment of belonging. It is best understood when juxtaposed against its opposite, exclusion. Inclusion, like anti-racism, creates belonging; exclusion creates othering.

- Anti-racism is focused and sustained action, by a mix of people which includes inter-cultural, inter-faith, multi-lingual and inter-abled communities with the intent to change a system or an institutional policy, practice, or procedure which has oppressive effects.

21st-century Collection Development: Think Globally, Act Locally

Authority, appropriateness, accuracy or timeliness, physical characteristics, collection fit, information quality, demand, content, and special characteristics are how information resources have generally been added to a library collection (Engelson 2015). DEI and anti-racism emerged towards the end of the 20th century (ALA; IFLA/UNESCO 2012).

There are many ways to incorporate DEI using the principle of "think globally, act locally." One of them is by being aware of gender inclusivity and equity in the local context, making inclusion an explicit policy criterion in library collection policies (Mbambo-Thata et al. 2019). Library user groups, especially women, the poor, Indigenous persons, and the historically under-represented, can be identified and named using local thesauri and in consultation with users. The library should strive to collect materials by these groups of authors, not merely provide resources for them as users. The key is to identify the marginalized, excluded people. For example, the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders (AIATSIS) has produced *Pathways*, a web gateway to thesauri for the collections of Indigenous languages and people (AIATSIS, 2021). If the community of users isn't yet fully understood and no thesaurus is available, browse the Atla Thesaurus of Religious Occupational Terms, Library of Congress Demographic Group Terms, and similar resources. Another way is to use the collection levels stated in the library's policy—in the US context: out of scope, minimal, basic information, instructional support, research, and comprehensive levels—and make exceptions inclusive. For example, because children's books are out of scope in a seminary library's collection development policy, a faculty member is using their own special collection developed over years. The library does not want to absorb the collection, but it names

the "user groups" of this collection in its collection policy. With the cooperation of the faculty member, the library does a diversity audit of the collection to ensure that it is inclusive.

Types of diversity can help set collecting priorities. Some examples are:

1. **Cultural / historical diversity**, such as Indigenous knowledge held in oral histories, beliefs, and intangible cultural heritage. Indigenous knowledge (IK), historically marginalized and traditionally not collected by libraries, has been shown to be vital to the development of societies, nations, and economies. IK is often endangered because it is linked to linguistic diversity, collectively owned, and lacks documentation. Abioye and Oluwaniyi (2017) provide an excellent definition of library collection development as "the means of meeting the information needs of the people (a service population) in a timely and economical manner using information resources locally held, as well as from other organizations." They found that Nigerian federal libraries are engaged in IK collection development and preservation despite a lack of funding partners and bilingual librarians.

2. **Linguistic diversity,** such as dead or dying languages represented by patrons. Librarians should prioritize resources in the language of the users. Be informed about language hotspots, i.e., areas of the world with many languages near extinction (Living Tongues Institute for Endangered Languages 2022). Libraries in these regions (and those elsewhere with these people) can prioritize their documentation (texts, lexicons, dictionaries, A/V materials).

3. **Access diversity**, such as open access, open educational resources, and theological commons. The open access movement has gained ground, but the global south has become disillusioned by exorbitant article processing charges. Open access also lacks author geographic diversity (Smith et al. 2020). Plus, there's been little work done to integrate open access workflows and products into collection development (Dyas-Correaia and Devakos, 2014). Librarians must grasp these nuances. Librarians in the global north must reach out to those in the LMICs, who, however inadequate and inter-

mittent their digital access may be now, can form alliances that enrich the geographic and format diversity of open access. At a more prosaic level, Atla Digital Library, OAPEN, and Patheos all provide open access content in religion.

4. **Source diversity**, that is, materials are acquired from multiple sources. Outsourced collection development is rejected or managed stringently so that local selection can take advantage of local presses and alternative publishers who challenge mainstream views.

5. **Religious diversity**, including ecumenism, interfaith, and multi-faith studies, as well as folk religions. Christianity has emerged through several periods which can be broadly classified as classical, historical, ecumenical, and the present period of global consciousness. In this period of global consciousness, Christianity in the two-thirds world (also called the global south) is more dominant than in Europe-America and has relationships with other world religions (Center for the Study of Global Christianity, 2022). Folk religions and interspirituality are also increasing.

6. **Identity diversity**, such as users' experiential differences, neurodiversity, and professional diversity. An awareness of the special characteristics of users will help the librarian meet user needs. For example, learn from Charlie Remy, an academic librarian with autism (Remy 2018).

7. **Intellectual diversity** beyond conventional representation, experience, and points of view. Often "own voices" are missing in libraries. For example, the Circle of Concerned Woman African Theologians began publishing because, as Africans, women, and theologians in a male-centered, Western-dominated field they just could not find space for their voices to be heard. In the US, WNDB, a successful non-profit that is improving children's literature, started in 2014 from a tweet with the hashtag #WeNeedDiverseBooks bemoaning the lack of diversity in that field. Representation and "own voices" authorship, as well as materials citing "others" who are not often cited are critical for intellectual diversity.

8. **Format diversity**, such as audio-visual books, movies, e-books, and online content. Book industry reports show that audio books and e-books have increased in readership globally. The proliferation of digital videos and photos has outpaced the abilities of libraries to collect them. The spirituality and religion collection in the Moving Image Archive of the Internet Archive has 120,881 movies; within this is a sub-collection of Islamic Sermons and Lessons, which comprises 160,875 audio files and 40,814 movies. In light of the serials price crisis and declining book acquisitions, open access digital content first and rightsizing have become collection management priorities (Johnson 2012; Miller and Ward 2022). Titles of local and regional significance and titles not often held by others are preferred; participation in consortia and collaborative activities are employed to meet users' needs for less used materials. Saving Ukrainian Cultural Heritage Online is a dramatic example of how people and organizations came together to archive Ukrainian libraries' online content when Russia invaded Ukraine. The library's location in a conflict zone should also determine priorities.

Equity-informed Preparatory Practices for Collection Development

1. **Global South Publishing and Decolonization** — Reflect on the information divide inequities between the countries of the world and how collection development can support the de-northernization of the publishing landscape. De-northernization means breaking the many barriers to publishing in LMICs. It also includes decolonization, which simply means "decentering whiteness" in academic discourse (Cooke 2020). The Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians, established by Mercy Amba Oduyoye, was a result of both her own inspiration and the solidarity of Constance Buchanan at Harvard University. Oduyoye encouraged African women theologians to become members of the Ecumenical Association of Third World Theologians. Buchanan created a space for African women theologians to spend a year at Harvard

researching and writing (Labeodan 2016). Their voices were heard, their writings collected and read. This is an example of equity on a global level. Another example is the Library of Congress and Book Dash (South Africa) partnership to publish open access born-digital children's books (Darby 2019). Librarians must reclaim their ancient role in publishing.

2. **Unconscious Bias Training** — "Before engaging in any diversity audit planning, librarians should not only educate themselves about libraries, literature, and representation, but also reflect upon their own biases and attitudes" (Carmack 2021). Resource selection must begin with critical self-awareness. All humans have biases, many learned (Zecker 2013). This is nothing to be ashamed of. Unconscious (hidden) bias can be measured by implicit association tests and corrected with lifelong learning. A continuing education program of unconscious bias training and cultural competencies for staff and key stakeholders is highly recommended.

3. **Prioritization** — Prioritization of a subject area is key before beginning a diversity audit of the current collection and reviewing its policy. Actions will differ in various libraries but thinking globally, acting locally for incorporating DEI and anti-racism still helps. For example, a library near a language hotspot with uncollected Indigenous knowledge could choose IK and language diversity collection priorities and strive for digital open access. Conversely, anti-racism may not be a priority in countries which do not classify people by racial categories but rather collect ethnocultural data—ethnicity (ancestry or ethnic origin, nationality, Indigenous/Aboriginal groups, tribe or caste), language, and religion. In each of these examples, resources will be preferred that represent and are created by the historically marginalized in their language(s), about their religion(s), culture(s), and technologies.

Conclusion

My library experiences have led me to discover an inspiring corollary to Ranganthan's (2006) five laws:

1. Books are for use.

2. Every reader his or her book.

3. Every book its reader.

4. Save the time of the reader.

5. A library is a growing organism.

6. Corollary: A growing library experiences growing pains and becomes transformational.

Supporting global south publishing with de-northernization, undertaking individual unconscious bias training, and institutional prioritization of DEI are not easy or comfortable. Using the principle of "think globally, act locally" to incorporate DEI and equity-minded preparatory practices will transform our libraries and institutions. These practices will nurture a keen appreciation of the global landscape of users, cultures, and collection items in collection development librarians. Such librarians will change unjust systems of epistemic supremacy in librarianship and help build just libraries for all people.

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