



Integrating Diversity across the LIS Curriculum: An Exploratory Study of Instructors' Perceptions and Practices Online

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Abstract:

This paper reports on research into how to introduce diversity across the library and information science (LIS) curriculum and best practices for its implementation online. An anonymous online questionnaire sent to instructors teaching both online and face-to-face courses gathered insights into their attitudes and practices through questions concerning two topics: how they think diversity should be represented and what techniques they believe work. The exploratory analysis of quantitative data (with select qualitative open-ended feedback) serves as the basis for development of a framework for action based on best practices taking into consideration the attitudes and perceptions that inform current practice. Future research will test that framework.

1. Introduction

Integrating diversity into the library and information science (LIS) curriculum can be a difficult and delicate task (Abdullahi and Kajberg, 2004) and is further complicated by a digital environment (Liu, 2005; Villar, 2006). Most instructors believe it is important to address diversity issues in the LIS curriculum (Mehra, in press; Roy, 2001), but vary on how

to accomplish it (Kajberg and Lørring, 2005). They may focus only on specialized courses; or fail to understand how diversity relates to their courses which they see as neutral, not related to race, class, gender, etc.; or simply not know where to begin. Further, online teaching is more time-consuming than face-to-face and typically lacks non-verbal nuances making perception uncertain and important (Chen and Chen, 2006; Wilson, 2001). This paper reports on research into how to introduce diversity across the curriculum to instructors and best practices for its implementation online. An anonymous online questionnaire (see Appendix 1) for instructors teaching both online and face-to-face courses gathered insights into their attitudes and practices through questions concerning two topics: how they think diversity should be represented and what techniques they believe work (Dogra and Karnik, 2003).

2. Research Context

This research into online pedagogy and diversity education in LIS has two purposes, namely to: identify attitudes of LIS instructors to the integration of diversity issues in online and face-to-face teaching; and, identify LIS instructors' best practices in integrating diversity into their courses. The study is a first step in addressing the integration of diversity into the LIS curriculum in an online environment in which we typically do not see each other and, therefore, cannot see reactions to the topics instructors introduce. LIS education is increasingly taking place online making exploration of diversity in that context more urgent. There is no literature on all three facets of this topic: online pedagogy, integrating diversity into the curriculum, and LIS education. However, there is some literature on diversity in the LIS curriculum (Allard, Mehra, and Qayyum, 2007; Mehra, Allard, Qayyum, and Barclay-McLaughlin, 2008) and much work on online teaching in LIS (Haythornthwaite et al., 2007; Kazmer, 2007).

3. Research Design and Methodology

An email message with an embedded link and code to gain access to an online questionnaire was sent to three hundred and thirty-three instructors (including lecturers) at 16 schools of LIS in the US and Canada that have accredited masters' programs that can be completed totally online. Of those 55 separate responses were collected (return-rate of 16.5%) though only 38 completed the entire questionnaire since the system let the respondents decide if they wanted to answer a particular question, providing varied number of responses to each question. The online questionnaire was mounted on the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee's Qualtrics system. The data was kept confidential and the system did not record any connection between the data and the individuals since we developed strong control separating the identifier from individual responses. The online questionnaire could not be conducted without having the consent present in the survey itself, rather than written consent. The Qualtrics system provided descriptive statistical analysis of the quantitative data while open, axial, and selective coding applying grounded theory principles to the qualitative open-ended responses generated themes and patterns across respondent feedback. Future analysis of the narrative data will be read using a Foucauldian discourse analysis approach.

4. Research Significance and Limitations

The analysis of quantitative data (with select qualitative open-ended data) in this research serves as the basis for development of a framework for action based on best practices and taking into consideration the attitudes and perceptions of course instructors that inform their current practice. Future research will test that framework. Instructors contributed to knowledge that can serve them very quickly as the researchers make known the best practices gleaned from this research. More sophisticated analysis will contribute to the overall knowledge in this area. Wider benefits involve the potential for more effective inclusion of

students from underrepresented groups who often feel isolated even without the further isolation of an online program. The profession and the publics it serves will benefit from graduates who are more attuned to diversity.

This research was exploratory: first, very few studies on how to integrate diversity into LIS curriculum have been conducted, and second, since the online questionnaire used in this research received a low response, future efforts will be made to include a larger set of participants, and gather both their quantitative and qualitative feedback. Also, since participating in this research was voluntary the respondents who provided their responses were not random. Additionally, space allows only limited feedback gathered during this exploratory research is presented and additional analysis will be reported in future publications.

5. Research Findings

5.1 Who Were the Research Respondents?

This section summarizes respondent feedback to questions 1-5 (see Appendix 1). Fifty-five instructors started the questionnaire of which 50 produced useable results. It was possible to skip questions so that respondents would not be discouraged. Of the 50, 18 or 36% identified themselves as belonging to a disadvantaged group. This figure is higher than the average for LIS instructors. The range of groups specified included African Americans, Hispanic/Chicanos, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer (LGBTQ), and, among others, a “heterosexual white male, non-liberal.” Seventeen men and 31 women declared their gender. Again, there were more women than the professoriate at large. Most of the respondents were seasoned faculty including 14 (29%) with 16 or more years of experience, although 13 (27%) had 0-3 years experience. Only 5 (10%) were professors with 15 (31%) each associate or assistant professors. Six (12%) lecturers and 8 (16%) adjuncts also responded—forming roughly a bell-shaped distribution. In terms of online teaching, 21 (43%) taught online every semester while 12 (24%) taught exclusively online and 14 (29%) taught online at least once a year. So, the sample represented a range of levels of experience with two-third of respondents always teaching online at least one course each semester.

These demographic data suggest that the sample is skewed toward self-identified minorities and women. This is not a bad thing for this particular study since instructors who consider themselves as representing a disadvantaged group may have considered the topic of diversity across the curriculum more seriously. They may have put more thought into it than other instructors (on average). Further, the sample appears to include a large group of experienced instructors who have taught in a distance education mode. So it is a very useful sample for the exploratory purpose of this research.

5.2 What did Diversity Mean to Research Respondents?

This section summarizes respondent feedback to question 6-8 (see Appendix 1). Most of the responses to “what does diversity mean to you?” can be divided into four categories: 1) the all-encompassing “... respecting differences of all types (age, ethnicity, native language, gender, sexuality, political persuasion) ...”; 2) at the other end of a spectrum, the specific “inclusion of Native Americans, African Americans, Latino(a)s, and Asian Americans into meaningful roles within the mainstream”; 3) the critical and more conceptual “a conservative movement to dilute true advancement of social equity and Affirmative Action”; and 4) the cynical “mixture of humans in diverse, non-white-male-anglosaxon cultures.” Most were on a spectrum from all-encompassing to specific.

Thirty-five respondents shared what diversity meant in their open-ended narratives. Summarizing, a majority of 25 respondents (71 %) included references to race, ethnicity, or culture. Other key meanings of diversity were related to: demographic characteristics (e.g., age, sexual orientation, gender, socio-economic status, country of origin, native language, social class, religion, disabilities, education, etc.); personal goals, learning styles, political persuasion, and social group membership; differences from the majority; interpretation of LIS theories and perspectives of library use through individual experiences; life, work, and ability experiences; respect and acknowledgement of, and learning from, differences; differences as a benefit instead of a deficit; variety in people, subjects and ideas; being inclusive, etc. There was also a direct reference to the definition of diversity in terms of its impact on LIS education. For example, one respondent noted: “From the instructor perspective, it is not my role to judge people's diversity or decide who is diverse and who isn't. My role is to teach everyone in my class and to try to accommodate everyone's needs, which may include considerations such as using examples that represent a range of backgrounds, using language that is inclusive, remaining neutral as regards political and religious issues which may come up, working to accommodate disabilities and different learning styles, etc. Even our field is diverse—it includes students who want to become librarians, web designers, school media, IT network security, etc.”

Given that some LIS online programs require a minimal attendance on campus, whereas, others can be completely remote, it is interesting to discover if and how instructors determine (or not) which students are or may be representatives of disadvantaged groups. Some are direct and just ask. Others depend on hints such as names which can go seriously awry.

In response to knowing whether or not their online students were from diverse groups, 12 of 37 respondents knew occasionally (32 %), 10 respondents knew often (27 %), seven respondents each knew sometimes (19 %) and nearly often (19 %), and one respondent never knew (3%). In response to how respondents knew that their online students were from diverse groups, 31 of 37 respondents knew based on student self-identification (84 %), 22 respondents knew based on photographs (59 %), 10 respondents knew via meeting the students in on-campus sessions (27 %), and one respondent knew via instructor administered survey (3%). In addition seven respondents knew via other means (19 %) that included: name or introduction, online presentations, the nature of student responses, regionalisms in writing, phone discussions, voice/accent, via introductions, or participation in social networking sites. For example, one respondent stated: “I usually know when my students identify as men or women, and as heterosexual, because they signal this by mentioning spouses, children, and traditional responsibilities. From names, most would appear to be from the mainstream of LIS, mostly women of European descent. I can also tell when my students are under-prepared by their undergraduate degree, which sometimes but not always signals class diversity.”

5.3 Why did Respondents Think Diversity in the Online LIS Curriculum was Important?

This section summarizes respondent feedback to question 11-12 (see Appendix 1). Question 11 asked how important the respondents believe that it is important to integrate diversity into the LIS curriculum. Of 38, 28 respondents (74%) agreed that it is either “very important” or “absolutely essential.” Only one said that it is “not important.” This finding is encouraging, but given the demographics of the sample, not generalizable.

The reasons respondents believed diversity in the online LIS curriculum was important included the following: the nature of librarianship as a service profession to meet the needs of diverse communities; libraries as centers of inclusion; the importance of recruiting and

retaining minority LIS students so that in the future they could serve their local communities and also become mentors to other minority students/librarians; responsiveness to the changing interactions in a global networked information environment in the contemporary age; relationship of equity, democracy, and information access for all; need to break traditional stereotypes of the librarian in public perceptions; accurately reflect the diversity experienced in people’s lived realities; develop empathy to view other people’s assumptions; diversify the LIS professions; lead to diversity of ideas and growth of knowledge to provide best solutions to world problems; educate and provide a global perspective to parochial and narrow-minded cultural viewpoints; amongst others.

5.4 What were the Challenges to Integrate Diversity into the LIS Curriculum?

This section summarizes respondent feedback to questions 18-19 (see Appendix 1). Table 1 summarizes the challenges to integrate diversity into the online and/or face-to-face LIS curriculum owing to factors that emerge from the nature of the diversity topic (i.e., internal conceptualization factors), curriculum-related (i.e., specific to LIS), and as a result of the people, lack of policy and/or appropriate actions (i.e., external environmental factors).

Sr. No.	Factors		Specific Examples
1.	Internal (e.g., topic-related)		Broad and complex subject; Idea of tolerance and being able to model neutrality; Developing empathy for the “other”; Kind of buzzword that is thrown around in a casual way; Too much “diversity” comes across as a form of colonialism; Understanding of the complexity of cultural, social and personal contexts; Value diversity not as a problem or issue, rather as an opportunity and an asset; What does it mean? How to operationalize diversity in a systematic way, taking into account student needs and institutional culture?
2.	LIS Curriculum		Already crowded curriculum; Developing/finding appropriate materials/case studies; Educating faculty what diversity means; Few cataloging courses that barely recognize cultural differences; Making time in the schedule to accommodate diversity; Mandatory time-restricted curriculum of 36 hours of courses needed; Need to expand examples; Not enough time to retool courses; Perception that diversity cannot be included in every course (e.g., java programming class); Introducing diversity-related themes in a natural, unforced manner that does not embarrass class members; Should be included in courses when relevant not just as a special topic.
3.	External	<i>People-Related</i>	Experiencing diversity on some personal level important to teach diversity; Faculty view that "I already have too much to teach in my course..."; Faculty/staff/students should reflect the campus/community diversity; Diverse faculty needed for there to be more diversity in the curriculum; Lack of knowledge about how to incorporate

			diversity into all aspects of courses; Minority students poorly represented in LIS schools; Resistance from faculty; Students who are not of underrepresented groups have little actual experience with what it actually means; Taking flak from students when there is backlash; White faculty lack knowledge to deal with substantive issues of diversity; Resistance from faculty; Not enough time to retool courses.
		<i>Lack of Policy and/or Appropriate Actions</i>	Application committee standards need to be committed to a diverse student body; Celebratory approaches that do not examine whiteness and white privilege; Costly proposition; Engage faculty regularly in diversity discussions; Ensure all groups have an opportunity to share their voice; Identify targets for integrating diversity concepts into each course; Pure lip-service; Resistance from the status-quo; Training from relevant departments/centers representing various forms of diversity.

Table 1: Challenging factors to integrate diversity into the LIS curriculum.

There are obviously interconnections between the categories presented. For example, one respondent identified a faculty-related issue impacting the LIS curriculum: “Once a faculty member has a syllabus established, it is often just tweaked until a major revision is needed. Faculty members may not see the need to include diversity in a web design course, for example. Faculty members like to be autonomous and believe that they are experts, and often they are. Suggestions for what to include in a course can often be perceived negatively.” Another respondent presented a limited perception: “For technical courses, diversity is often a moot point... the technology is the same for all.” Representing the expectations of students, one respondent shared: “Students need to see tangible benefits in how diversity integration in course content helps them in their career development and professional growth. If students belong to "normative majorities" they think diversity does not apply to them.”

5.5 Specific of the “Hows” to Integrate Diversity in the LIS Curriculum

This section summarizes respondent feedback to questions 10 and 13-17 (see Appendix 1). In response to how diversity should be included in the online and/or face-to-face LIS curriculum, 22 of 38 respondents identified inclusion of diversity issues in all courses as an effective strategy representing the highest percent (58 %). Further, analysis of qualitative open-ended respondent feedback identified qualifiers regarding course inclusion of diversity “in nearly all courses,” where appropriate,” “in all appropriate courses,” “in as many courses as possible,” “in appropriate ways” that shed light upon respondents’ belief that it was not going to be an easy task to include diversity in all courses (e.g., one respondent identified a course like php programming might not include a diversity component). Respondents did believe that diversity in all courses and specific courses that focused on diversity were both significant to revise the LIS curriculum to be more encompassing going beyond representing (as one respondent noted) only the “mythic white patriarchal heteronormative capitalist perspective.”

Regarding effective ways of including diversity in an online and/or face-to-face course, readings (33 of 38 respondents or 87 %), discussion of topics/questions (30 of 38 respondents or 79%), examples and encouragement of choice of relevant topics in assignments (each with

27 of 38 respondents or 71%), and case studies (26 of 38 respondents) formed the top five respondent selections. Further, analysis of qualitative open-ended respondent feedback drew attention to the need for requiring collaborative work with diverse members of class, especially delivered in an online format, accommodating multiple learning styles in grading and course methods and strategies (e.g., including pictures in addition to text), using storytelling from diverse “vantage points,” developing LIS services for different audiences, and participation in field experience as specific ways of including diversity in a course or LIS curriculum.

Regarding approaches of including diversity in their own online and/or face-to-face courses, readings (29 of 36 respondents or 81 %), discussion of topics/questions (26 of 36 respondents or 72%), encouraging choice of relevant topics in assignments (24 of 36 respondents or 67 %), units on topics related to diversity (18 of 36 respondents of 50 %), and assignments (17 of 36 respondents or 47 %) formed the top five respondent selections. Further, an analysis of qualitative open-ended respondent feedback identified specific ways that individual respondents incorporated diversity in their online and/or face-to-face courses. These included: inviting guest speakers, discussing relevant histories (e.g., past segregation in libraries), giving students a choice to include particular choices of interest in their assignments, grading that recognized multiple learning styles, amongst others. One respondent shared her strategy to include diversity in her courses: “Do it by stealth by helping students analyze the history of LIS ethical and scientific frameworks, and using sociological tools that help them understand the relationship between theory and practice.”

When asked to select different online and/or face-to-face courses in which diversity should be included a majority 21 of 30 respondents (70%) identified the topic of organization of information with a mean of 2.67 for the number of courses. The two next most popular course topics history/philosophy/principles of LIS and management/administration for diversity inclusion, namely, with both being identified by 19 of 30 respondents (63.33%) each and means of 2.05 and 2.42 respectively for the number of courses. Three course topics of collection development, services to user populations, and school libraries were identified by 18 of 30 respondents (60%) each as next popular course topics for diversity inclusion with a respective mean of 2.28, 2.33, and 2.44 for the number of courses. Further, analysis of qualitative open-ended respondent feedback identified most important topics within these courses as well as specific assignments that respondents designed to integrate diversity. Table 2 summarizes the topic categories and subtopics within LIS courses for diversity inclusion that respondents shared.

Sr. No.	Topic Category	Subtopics
1.	Organization of information	Bias in classification; Cultural and language issues in indexing and retrieval; Diversity in library classification and cataloging, classification theory, and knowledge organization; Organization of information and diversity.
2.	LIS history/philosophy/principles	Censorship; Cultural sensitivity; Ethics; Focus on partnerships and community engagement; History of libraries with readings about racial minorities; History of the public library services to diverse populations; History of libraries and media; History of services to minorities; Information literacy; Intellectual freedom covers diversity of ideas; Libraries and literacy; Race, gender, and sexuality in the info professions; Race, power, and literacy; Social and cultural competencies for LIS professionals; Values in libraries/librarianship with attention to diversity.
3.	Management/administration	Diversity recruitment in human resource development; Internet controls in China; Leadership and motivation; Leadership services to multicultural populations; Management of diversity, especially in human resources management; management ethics; Project management issues and diversity.
4.	Collection development	Building collections to meet the needs of diverse users; Collections for women's studies and minority studies (e.g., Gay and Lesbian, Hispanic, Asian, and Black studies); LGBTQ literature; Multicultural literature.
5.	Services to user populations	Classroom diversity and servicing minority students; Community services; Grant-writing for info professionals; Leadership services to multicultural populations; Programs for diverse communities; Resources and services for varied adult populations; School libraries and working with children of other ethnicities; Services to diverse communities; Service provision for minorities.
6.	Reference and Access	Diversity accessibility in design and development of systems; Diversity technology accessibility; Impact of information access on diverse populations; Information seeking and use in diverse cultural and social environments; Information policy issues around the digital divide, equity of access; Reading and achievement gap by race, gender, ethnicity; Selection and use of information sources by diverse populations; Website projects built around Native American legends.

Table 2: Topic categories and subtopics within LIS courses for diversity inclusion.

Regarding specific assignments designed by respondents to integrate diversity, one person stated: “My course, Metadata for Information Management, is a largely technical course but the second assignment is to design a real metadata work-plan for a digital library project for a mythical public library. I always select a project that involves a culture-rich collection and working with a culture, such as Indians or Amish, so that the students consider the issues of capturing and presenting cultural information and working with volunteers from a different culture.” Another respondent noted: “In my reference courses, we have a lesson about service to diverse patrons. We also discuss ethics in the context of reference services.” A third respondent stated: “In my information literacy course, we discuss how to appeal to people who learn in diverse ways...In all of my classes we discuss the core documents from the ALA, such as the Code of Ethics and the Library Bill of Rights, both of which discuss equity of access to all people, regardless of background. Also, I make a point of treating all students with respect and kindness, regardless of who they are, and I believe that an instructor's manner with students can set a tone in the class, which the students will follow.”

6. Discussion: A Framework of Action Based on Best Practices

Based on respondent feedback to question 9-10 (see Appendix 1) and analysis of feedback to other questions, Table 3 summarizes initially identified key elements in a framework for action based on best practices identified by research respondents. It takes into consideration effective ways that 37 respondents shared in how they make students from diverse groups feel included in the program/courses. Future publications will discuss this framework in more detail.

Sr. No.	Elements	Actions and Examples
1.	Attitudes	Care about them and their experiences; Celebrate diversity, honor diverse perspectives and cultural roots; Common courtesy; Include diverse opinions, feelings, and points of view; Intolerance for racial prejudice, homophobia, sexism, and other forms of bias; “R-E-S-P-E-C-T!” all people; Tolerance of differing opinions in all discourse; Value recognition of diversity of experiences.
2.	Behaviors	Ask all students to do the same work in the same way judged by same criteria; Avoid language (e.g. sexist, Western European bias) which excludes or marginalizes; Enriched personal relationships; Make diverse students feel welcome, included, and comfortable; Mentor, advise, and encourage students to excel in academic and professional careers; Openness and approachability; Treat students equally though show empathy/support to unique experiences.
3.	Curriculum	Address issues openly in class discussion; Assignments that require working with diverse populations; Classes on service to diverse populations; Critically interrogate marginalized perspectives in each class; Depending on the course type let students bring in their own perspective from their culture to the subject in question; Include diversity in course materials, case studies, discussions (private and whole class), readings related to diverse groups and inclusive

			of differences; Include diverse guest lecturers in courses; include equity of access and service in course core competencies; Integrate critical literature on race, culture, literacy into course readings; Integrate and encourage interaction between diverse students/faculty in class as well as in workgroups; Offer online courses for students who have mobility issues; Offer courses that are focused on services to various groups (e.g., services to older adults) to make students feel that the program recognizes diversity and wants to help them work with diverse constituencies; Provide examples of library leaders of color; Racial and economic diversity reflected in the curriculum; Service learning or field experiences among diverse populations; Teach conflict management and collaborative skills and acknowledge that diversity can cause some tensions within groups who are called upon to collaborate.
4.	Management/ Programmatic/Policy		Encourage peer participation in student groups and cohort socialization; Invite students to come to campus for an introduction to the program; Market diversity as a high priority; Programs that address diverse students' needs (e.g., recruitment and retention); Minority grants info in application package and website; Personal advising; Recruit from diverse areas; Review applications holistically; scholarships for students from diverse backgrounds (e.g., offering scholarships so that students with limited means can participate); Strict disciplinary action against minority-directed abuse.
5.	Representations	<i>Actual</i>	Diverse faculty and staff; Diverse role models; Increase % of minority students (minority representation); Recruit and hire faculty from diverse groups is important so that students can feel included.
		<i>Surrogate</i>	Include images of diverse people on program website; Include materials that represent all the groups and individuals.
5.	Specific Tangibles		Build one-on-one advising interactions with each student early in the program; Diversity club; Diversity committee (for students, staff, and faculty); Diversity listserv to channel diversity news/opportunities; Help place diverse students in internships and jobs; Maintain relationships with diverse alums and have them help recruit future students; Require students to post a bio of themselves to share on the school and course website.

Table3: Key Elements in a Framework for Action.

The variety of perceptions of diversity is also apparent in the ways suggested to make diverse students feel included (question 9, see Appendix 1). Again, many of the responses were on a spectrum in this case ranging from equal treatment to means specific to students from

underrepresented groups such as focused scholarships. Others suggested visibility of a commitment to diversity such as photos on the school's website or activities such as a diversity committee or club. It is of some concern that equal treatment is still seen as a solution to problems that stem from an unequal root.

The responses to how instructors could make their courses more welcoming (question 10, see Appendix 1) were similar, but more concrete from "Treat them just like everybody else" to "Celebrate diversity by encouraging students (to the extent that they are comfortable with this and with due respect for their privacy) to share their backgrounds and experiences in group work and class forums. Ensure that diversity is reflected in examples and case studies. Introduce diversity themes at appropriate places in the syllabus. The positive steps are more important than the don'ts, but also avoid language (e.g. sexist) which excludes or marginalizes" and the more cerebral "Critically interrogate marginalized perspectives in each class, integrate critical literature on race, culture, literacy into course readings; provide examples of library leaders of color." The responses to these questions merit considerable in-depth analysis using critical theoretical approaches.

7. Conclusion

One respondent in our research noted: "LIS is hostile to people from under-represented groups because it is so busy patting itself on the back for defending intellectual freedom, it is left completely unable to detect its own ideology. LIS education, like LIS in general, is also unable to see under-represented groups as anything but tokens, photo ops for a sort of "United Colors of Benetton" promotional material. Until LIS curricula is entirely revamped to not encode and valorize white patriarchal heterocentric capitalism, students of color, poor students, students with disabilities, and LGBTQI students will continue to earn MLIS degrees entirely by their own wits and fortitude. In short, I haven't seen in my program, the one I earned my MLIS from, or any other, any real and coherent diversity initiative that wasn't at base about mere gestures." This research is a beginning, and one step towards acknowledging what is there in terms of such realities and experiences, and what should be done in terms of integrating diversity issues in the LIS curriculum, based on the instructors' perceptions and practices online.

Obviously, integrating diversity into the LIS curriculum is not easy. Yet, it is urgent that LIS education in the United States become more inclusive and step up to the expectations in the 21st century to provide more effective strategies to address the needs of minority and underserved populations or be left behind in the contemporary global networked information society (Mehra, 2008; Mehra and Bishop, 2007). Several respondents recognized that to put pressure on complacent LIS educators, administrators, and policy-makers, LIS accreditation standards (and agencies developing the standards such as the American Library Association and the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions) need to address and integrate diversity in their curriculum/program assessment and evaluation measures.

Most feedback in this research was about diversity issues in general, and the online context was either alluded to indirectly, assumed to be the referent, or addressed directly only in limited and specific contexts. For example, one respondent noted: "First of all, since I do a lot of online teaching, there's a need to simply bridge the distance. I use photos of myself to make the students feel there is a person there. When my African-American TA taught a session, she used her photo. I design assignments that allow students to have a lot of flexibility in their topic choices, so that students can include topics that reflect their background and perspectives (currently I have students who have chosen topics related to gay

marriage, African American history, etc.).” Another respondent noted: “Since I teach online and students are mostly anonymous the barriers in regard to race (or even age or gender) do not play significant roles. Diversity becomes the bigger challenge in terms of limitations in being able to use the technology—the technology divide and in regards to physical limitations).” Future research will help understand the perceptions reflected in such stray remarks that alluded to the presumption that diversity does not play a significant role online. However, these outliers are outnumbered by the data collected during this research in which respondents asserted the need for LIS education to become more responsive to issues of diversity in both online and/or face-to-face situations.

Respondents shared a need to identify, define, and construct diversity integration in both online and/or face-to-face LIS courses via concrete examples of its manifestation as a must. For example, one respondent stated: “The challenge is to incorporate experiences that provide a more meaningful understanding, for instance allowing students to write a collection development policy for a library in a community center in a neighborhood with 7 different language groups represented. Talking to the people at this center and asking what they want to see in this library was very eye opening to these students.”

A final important suggestion based on the data analysis reported in this paper is the need to take a more cohesive, concrete, and systematic approach to diversity integration in the online and/or face-to-face LIS curriculum by furthering actions at various levels of implementation. These actions include looking at theory and practice together, proposing outcome-based impacts on local minority communities and individuals, developing diversity integration standards at the accreditation agencies, extending discourse at professional associations and formal and informal gatherings, addressing specific concerns of faculty and students, acknowledging organizational politics and institutional culture inertias, amongst others. The main reason for taking such a holistic approach is two-fold: first, all these areas of action potentially impact how diversity is perceived and how diversity integration in LIS curricula may play itself out in specific programs of study, hence, a consideration of all of them is a must. Second, the various identified areas of action are interrelated and influence each other; hence, suggesting integrated actions for diversity integration in LIS curriculum may avoid fragmentary and isolated efforts with minimal impact such as those we have seen in the recent past.

8. Acknowledgements

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10. Appendices

Appendix 1: Faculty Questionnaire for Diversity in the Curriculum Project [was formatted differently in Qualtrics, but the content remains the same]

1. Do you consider yourself to be from an underrepresented group? Yes___ No___
Optionally, specify which group: _____
2. Please specify your gender.
3. How many years have you taught in library and information studies?
0-3__ 4-7__ 8-11__ 12-15__ 16 or more__

4. What is your current rank?
 Professor__ Associate professor__ Assistant professor__ Lecturer__ Adjunct instructor__
5. How often do you teach online?
 Never_ Most years_ At least one course a year_ Every semester_ All of my teaching_
6. What does diversity mean to you?
7. Do you know whether or not your online students are from diverse groups?
 Never_ Occasionally_ Sometimes_ Often_ Nearly always_
8. If so, how?
 Student self-identification_
 Photos_
 On campus sessions_
 Instructor administered survey_
 Other (please specify)_____
9. What are good ways of making students from diverse groups feel included in your program?
10. What are good ways of making students from diverse groups feel included in your course?
11. To what extent is it important to include diversity in the LIS curriculum?
 Not important_ It would be nice_ Should be done_ Very important_
 Absolutely essential_
12. Why do you think diversity in the LIS curriculum is important to the extent that you indicated in previous question?
13. How should diversity be included in the curriculum?
 Primarily in courses that focus on issues of diversity__
 Inclusion of diversity issues in required courses__
 Inclusion of diversity issues in appropriate electives courses__
 Inclusion of diversity issues in all courses__
 Other (please specify)_____
14. What are effective ways of including diversity in a course? Select all that apply
 Readings
 Units on topics related to diversity
 Examples
 Case studies
 Assignments
 Discussion topics/questions
 Group projects
 Exercises
 Encourage choice of relevant topics in assignments
 Community engagement

Other (please specify)_____

15. What courses? How many different courses? Please indicate the number of courses next to the category:

History/Philosophy/Principles of LIS 1_ 2_ 3_ 4_ 5 or more_

LIS Education 1_ 2_ 3_ 4_ 5 or more_

Collection Development 1_ 2_ 3_ 4_ 5 or more_

Services to User Populations 1_ 2_ 3_ 4_ 5 or more_

Informatics 1_ 2_ 3_ 4_ 5 or more_

School Libraries 1_ 2_ 3_ 4_ 5 or more_

Organization of Information 1_ 2_ 3_ 4_ 5 or more_

Information Systems and Retrieval 1_ 2_ 3_ 4_ 5 or more_

Types of Libraries and Information Providers 1_ 2_ 3_ 4_ 5 or more_

Management/Administration 1_ 2_ 3_ 4_ 5 or more_

Other (please specify category and # of courses)_____

16. What were the topics within those courses? Please specify (if there are many include only those you judge to be most important).

17. What approaches have you incorporated into your courses?

Readings

Units on topics related to diversity

Examples

Case studies

Assignments

Discussion topics/questions

Group projects

Exercises

Encourage choice of relevant topics in assignments

Community engagement

Other (please specify)_____

18. What challenges do you see to integrating diversity into the curriculum?

19. Is there anything else you want to tell us about diversity in the curriculum?