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Introduction to the Special Issue on Diversity and Library and Information Science Education

Paul T. Jaeger, John Carlo Bertot, and Mega Subramaniam

This special issue of *Library Quarterly* is devoted to talks from the 2012 Symposium on Diversity and Library and Information Science Education, hosted at the University of Maryland, College Park (UMCP), on November 8 and 9, 2012. This unique event fostered a national dialogue devoted to the intersection of diversity, inclusion, information, and librarian education. It was sponsored by the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS), the Information Policy and Access Center (iPAC) at the College of Information Studies, UMCP, and the UMCP's Office of Diversity and Inclusion.

Issues of diversity are central concerns for a field dedicated to promoting widespread and equitable access to information and information literacy, both in the composition of the profession and in need for practice infused with cultural competence. In addition to historical issues, technological, social, and demographic changes give greater importance to information and information technologies, expanding the range of diverse populations affected by information issues. Information diversity encompasses race, gender, ethnicity, language, literacy, disability, age, socioeconomic status, technology access and skills, and other important considerations.

To be sure, a number of different library and information science (LIS) schools have promoted diversity through individual courses, recruiting plans, mentoring initiatives, and academic programs. There has not previously been, however, an organized forum for professionals, educators, researchers, government agencies, and nonprofits from around the country to collectively consider approaches, innovations, and best practices to ensure that graduates of LIS programs are culturally competent professionals who are ready to create, define, and provide inclusive services to diverse populations upon graduation.

With its 159 registrants, twenty-one speakers, and twenty volunteers, the symposium successfully brought together students, professionals, scholars, and leaders to explore innova-

tions, challenges, and solutions to diversity issues within LIS. Attendees came to the event from around the country and included deans, administrators, and faculty members from LIS programs; LIS students; public library directors, managers, and librarians; academic and research librarians; representatives of government and private funding organizations; directors of school library programs; experts in accessibility, usability, and policy; and alumni of LIS programs. Feedback from the attendees of the event suggests that the symposium is timely and needed and that it needs to continue.

This special issue features selections from the many highlights of the symposium, with the speakers converting their talks into articles that convey the substantial ideas that were presented. The articles in this issue begin with two talks on the overall importance of diversity within higher education. Dr. Herman Totten of the University of North Texas, one of the two keynote speakers, offers his insights on the advantages of diversity in education. Dr. Kumea Shorter-Gooden, chief diversity officer and associate vice president of the UMCP, explores the university as a culturally competent organization.

Following these two broad discussions of diversity, several articles focus on specific aspects of diversity, inclusion, and information in education. Dr. Sandra Hughes-Hassell of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill delivered the Anne Scott MacLeod Lecture in Children's Literature at the symposium, detailing the roles and importance of counter-storytelling in multicultural young adult literature. Jill Lewis, former director of the Maryland State Library for the Blind and Physically Handicapped, delivered the other keynote of the symposium, the topic of which was the place of disability within education about diversity. Rebecca Oxley, the founder of the iDiversity Student Organization at UMCP, discusses the importance of student groups in building an inclusive culture in LIS education.

The symposium articles conclude with one by the special issue coeditors, who were also the symposium's cochairs. This final article bridges several talks individually given by the cochairs to paint a broad picture of the current state of diversity and inclusion within library and information science education at this point, as well as the pressing needs and available opportunities for LIS programs in this area. Complementing the themes of the symposium, this special issue also includes a regularly contributed article by Plummer Alston Jones Jr., which provides historical perspective on an early leader in providing inclusive library services to changing communities.

For those interested in more content from the symposium, all events were recorded and the symposium archives will soon be available on the iDiversity website: idiversity.umd.edu. The tweets from the symposium are already cataloged at <http://storify.com/LibrariansFTW/1st-symposium-on-diversity-in-library-and-informat>.

Given the high level of interest and the success of this event, the Symposium on Diversity and Library and Information Science Education should become a regular event. Such an ave-

nue for regular discussion and sharing will benefit LIS educators, researchers, practitioners, policy makers, and students, and it will keep the LIS community abreast with the changes in needs of the community that we serve. The symposium organizers have already begun to seek funding to make the symposium a biennial occurrence.