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Catherine Liebau-Nelsen, San José State University

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Dedication Despite Difficult Times

Catherine A. Liebau-Nelsen
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Dedication Despite Difficult Times

Acknowledgements

About Author
Catherine Liebau-Nelsen is a library and information science graduate student at San Jose State University School of Information and the editor-in-chief of the Student Research Journal. After earning her B.A. from Fresno State University in English, she decided (after a mere week of researching options) to explore the field of library science - a decision inspired greatly by her love of literature.

This editorial is available in School of Information Student Research Journal: https://scholarworks.sjsu.edu/ischoolsrj/vol10/iss2/1

Published by SJSU ScholarWorks, 2020
Dedication Despite Difficult Times

The flexibility and dedication of all editors and authors who worked on the pieces in this issue during these challenging times deserve praise and applause beyond what I can even begin to offer. In September of 2020, Dr. Linda Main, Interim Director of San Jose State University School of Information, stated: “I continue to feel inspired by the resiliency of our students, alumni, faculty and staff members. Many obstacles have crowded our path over the last several months, but we push forward” (Main, L., personal communication, September 3, 2020). As the current editor-in-chief of the Student Research Journal (SRJ), I am honored to work with such motivated editors and authors who epitomize Dr. Main’s message. Though there have been challenges, the effort devoted by these individuals who helped create this issue exemplifies the resiliency of SJSU School of Information students, alumni, staff, and faculty.

Contributing a project report on the importance of the diversity-driven action plans, San Jose State University faculty and staff members Dr. Kristen Rebmann, Parinaz Zartoshty, Kimberly Green, Erin Kelly-Weber, Dr. Vidalino Raatior, and Lori Vonderach discuss their two-month, multi-faceted study of climate assessment activities that work to develop equity-and-inclusivity supportive action plans. Fascinating and informative, the report delves into the development of effective action plans which meet the aforementioned goals and offers detailed insight into the steps taken by SJSU researchers who undertook the project.

The SRJ’s own editor, Brianna Limas, writes on the information needs of undergraduate students. Detailing the information seeking behaviors of a community which their research depicts being typically comprised of novice researchers, Limas discusses the current literature on the topic and joins the discourse by highlighting the effective use of social networking sites and emerging technologies while subtly recommending these to the attention of academic libraries to better serve undergraduate students’ needs.

SJSU School of Information alum Carrie E. Kitzmiller critically reviews Public Library Collections in the Balance: Censorship, Inclusivity, and Truth by Jennifer Downey and recommends the book to public librarians and library science students, in particular. Through a thorough review, Kitzmiller analyzes the book in sections while noting relevant topics addressed, such as public libraries meeting the needs of the LGBTQ+ community and the controversial stance on filtering or restricting information for youth.

In this former SRJ editor and SJSU alum’s book review, Terry Schiavone summarizes and evaluates the content of Laura A. Millar’s A Matter of Facts: The Value of Evidence in an Information Age, comparing the findings to those of other relevant works while recommending sources for further research. In the current political, social, and economic climate, Schiavone’s concise analysis of Millar’s message on digital information holds importance for all readers.

Former SRJ editor and SJSU alum Claire C. Goldstein offers an evidence summary of a study which investigated the information needs of senior rural public library users. Intriguing and contradictory to what a researcher may expect, Goldstein summarizes the study and how it was conducted while analyzing the findings and highlighting the most interesting and relevant points.

This issue, the 20th of the SRJ, showcases just a fraction of the talent, intellect, and passion that SJSU School of Information students and alumni have to offer. The editorial team alumni-heavy issue was not planned but a happy coincidence. For this, I have all previous editors-in-chief to thank for their choices in editors. Even after leaving their roles as editors or graduating, SJSU School of Information alumni remain dedicated and motivated by their passion and work toward excellence.
The SRJ editorial team, including managing editor Sarah Wilson and myself, looks forward to reviewing the outstanding manuscripts which driven graduate students from all over the world continue to submit. The Student Research Journal will celebrate its 10th anniversary in Spring, so please join us for the publication of the next issue. Thank you.

Acknowledgements

Although I could continue endlessly on the efforts, support, and extraordinary work of my fellow SRJ editors, I will limit my praises for the sake of our readers’ time and page length. Firstly, thank you to Sarah Wilson for being the most dedicated, analytical, passionate, and brilliant managing editor that I could imagine. Her strong work ethic and keen eye inspire me daily to improve my own skills so that we can publish the best SRJ issues possible during our year together. Wilson spent countless hours as an extra set of eyes on this final publication. Without her, this issue would not have been possible.

The editorial team – Brianna Limas, Dorianne Shaffer, Justin Sana, Kristen Jacobson, Marian Griffin, and Shelly Sarfati – consistently offered quality reviews of submissions that both Wilson and I are proud of. In spite of full work schedules, coursework, family obligations, etc., each and every editor consistently impressed us with their work. The skills and commitment of SRJ content and copy editors truly demonstrate the abilities of SJSU School of Information students; they serve as excellent representations of the best and brightest our school has to offer (though I will admit that I am incredibly biased when it comes to this phenomenal team)!

If it were not for Dr. Kristen Rebmann reaching out to offer her team’s research for the invited contribution, the 20th issue of the journal would be missing a faculty contribution. I am both so grateful and thrilled to include their work in the SRJ.

Finally, I must thank Dr. Anthony Bernier for his guidance and encouragement throughout my first semester as the editor-in-chief of the SRJ. His passion for the journal, knowledge of the profession, and willingness to share information and advice benefit and inspire not only me, but the whole editorial team, as well. We are lucky to have such an enthusiastic faculty advisor.
Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Climate Assessment Activities: Development and Strategic Use in Diversity Action Plans

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Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Climate Assessment Activities: Development and Strategic Use in Diversity Action Plans

Abstract
This project report describes climate assessment activities in support of the development of a college-level diversity, equity, and inclusion (EDI) action plan. Elements of the climate assessment activities are described along with their purpose and rationale for inclusion. Recommendations are made for libraries to design and deploy their own EDI assessment activities with the goal of developing robust action plans supportive of inclusive excellence.

Keywords
equity, diversity, inclusion, climate assessments, action plans, strategic planning, libraries, library education

Acknowledgements
About Author
Parinaz Zartoshty, EDI-WG Co-Lead: Parinaz Zartoshty joined CPGE as the Director of International Student & Scholar Services (ISSS) in May 2018. She has served in similar roles at other institutions of higher education. She entered the field of international education after working for NGOs, including UNICEF and Amnesty International. Parinaz speaks several languages and has worked and studied abroad. She appreciates and encourages a global mindset. She is committed to campus internationalization efforts and strives to create a global ethos at SJSU by fostering a culture of global citizenship and embracing the importance of intercultural competencies, both key factors and contributors to diversity, equity and inclusion efforts as well. Parinaz was born and raised in Tehran, Iran and immigrated to the U.S. at a young age. Her race, class, gender and country of origin have greatly impacted her professional and career path.

Dr. Kristen Rebmann, EDI-WG Co-Lead: Kristen Rebmann is a Professor in the School of Information. She joined the iSchool in 2007 after completing a PhD in Communication from UCSD where she worked as a doctoral researcher at the Laboratory of Comparative Human Cognition. Working within a cultural-historical theoretical framework, her research involves different forms of technology integration at the community level. A diversity, equity, and inclusion advocate, she served (previously) as the iSchool's Diversity Committee Chair and is the iSchool's current Retention, Tenure, and Promotion Chair. Like many of our students (and reflecting California's rapid demographic changes and diversification), Kristen is a multiracial, multiethnic scholar. She descends from Mexican laborers who left Texas for California in the 1930s and the children of European immigrants who settled in Idaho (also in the 1930s). Lori Vonderach:

Lori Vonderach joined CPGE in December 2019 as an Office Coordinator for the Operations Unit where she supports the Dean and CPGE operations, including helping to support the international students the college serves. Lori has always been a strong advocate for children with special needs (including Autism, Emotional Disturbance and English Language Learners) and worked for the Evergreen School District as a SDC Teacher's Assistant for 12 years. Prior to joining SJSU, Lori worked at Xactly Corporation providing administrative and office support. During this time, she had the privilege of being the direct supervisor for a young man who was part of Best Buddies (a program that secures jobs for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities.) She was also the direct supervisor for four high school students from the Cristo Rey Jesuit High School work study program. This program supports underserved communities in the region. Born and raised in the Bay Area, Lori is the proud parent of three grown children (two SJSU alums) and is inspired by the students with whom she works as an ally and an advocate.
Dr. Vidalino Raatior: Vid Raatior (pronouns: he/him/his) is a proud indigenous member of the Pwaraka and Alengeitaw clans of Chuuk State in the Pacific Island nation of the Federated States of Micronesia (FSM). He is a Program Specialist in the Study Abroad & Away office. Previously, Vid has worked over 20 years in higher education in the fields of international and multicultural education. Born and raised on a small island in Northwest region of Chuuk State, Vid came to the United States for college as an international student eventually earning an Ed.D in Professional Educational Practice from the University of Hawaii at Manoa. His doctoral research focused on strength-based approaches to student support services for Micronesian students attending college in the US. Vid’s lived experiences as an immigrant in the US continues to inspire him to advocate for diversity, equity and inclusion.

Erin Kelly-Weber: Erin Kelly-Weber joined CPGE in March 2020 as a Program Specialist in the Study Abroad and Away office. Prior to her tenure at SJSU, she facilitated cultural exchange programs for international high school students during their exchange year in the U.S. She currently serves as a co-chair of Diversity Abroad’s Education Abroad Student Support & Advising Task Force, which develops resources and tools designed to support students across their identities throughout the education abroad continuum. Throughout her decade of working in international education, Erin has studied or worked in 12 countries. Her variety of intercultural professional experiences, in addition to living on the East Coast, Midwest, and West Coast of the U.S., have continued to shape her worldview. Erin is deeply passionate about fostering cross-cultural communication and creating accessible and equitable international education opportunities for every student.

Kimberly Green: Kim Green first began working at International Gateways, formerly named “Studies in American Language”, as an instructor in 2000. In her current role as Associate Director, she continues to teach while also overseeing student academic and cultural engagement including curriculum and accreditation review and cultural programming. The former chair of the TESOL International Organization Intensive English Programs Interest Section, she remains active in international discussions regarding learning and culture. A native Californian of multicultural origins, Kim has lived around the U.S. and the world which has fueled her passion for history, culture, and her desire to teach.

Authors
Dr. Kristen M. Radsliff Rebmann, Parinaz Zartoshty, Kim Green, Erin Kelly-Weber, Dr. Vidalino Raatior, and Lori Vonderach
Background

In the fall of 2020, the San Jose State University School of Information partnered with sibling programs in the San Jose State University (SJSU) College of Professional & Global Education (CPGE) to develop an Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) Action Plan for the college. Those programs include: International Student and Scholar Services (ISSS), International Gateways (IG), Study Abroad and Away (SAA), Open University (OU), Summer Session (SS), Department of Applied Data Science (ADS). This project report describes the process of developing an EDI action plan at the unit level—something that many libraries are embarking on. Focus is placed on describing the elements of the EDI climate assessment activities, rationale for their inclusion, and their role in the project’s action plan (and potential extension to) similar activities in libraries.

Setting

CPGE’s programs have ties to many communities that provide leadership in the advancement of EDI. Those communities include SJSU, Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) International Association, the American Library Association (ALA), the Digital Analytics Association (DAA), the National Association of Foreign Student Advisers’ (NAFSA) Association of International Educators, the Association for Library & Information Science Educators (ALISE), Diversity Abroad (2019), Association of International Education Administrators (AIEA), the Institute of International Education (IIE) and the Forum on Education Abroad.

CPGE’s mission statement captures the importance of global perspectives in producing successful graduates. A global, intercultural mindset, as well as an understanding and orientation toward EDI is central to the work that CPGE programs do on a daily basis, as reflected in the college’s strategic goals, vision, and mission:

In the College of Professional and Global Education at San José State University, we provide access to relevant educational programs that allow individuals to gain knowledge and skills that create a solid foundation for them to be engaged and productive members of a global society. We offer a learning environment that is dynamic and innovative, ensuring that we are responsive to the ever-evolving workforce and industry demands. Our college is the nexus for connecting professionals, institutions, businesses and industries, locally and from around the world, to the knowledge, resources, and talents of Silicon Valley’s premier public university. (College of Professional and Global Education, n.d., “Our Mission” section)

Along similar lines, a global ethos is a central component of CPGE’s strategic goals to “enhance the overall positive experience of international students and scholars, and achieve awareness and understanding of the value of their presence on campus and in the community” and “foster global competencies in our students and scholars through innovative curricular and co-curricular programming” (College of Professional and Global Education, n.d., “Strategic Goals” section).

Components of the EDI Climate Assessment Activities

With these college level goals in mind, the Dean and Associate Dean of CPGE, Dr. Ruth Huard and Dr. Sandy Hirsh respectively, established an EDI Working Group to develop several climate assessment activities and draft a subsequent action plan. Our working group developed several activities that occurred via several steps over 2 months, including:
Values Articulation

As our first step, our team felt it was important to come together as representatives of our many fields and members of the SJSU and CPGE communities to define exactly why EDI is so important to advance. We came up with a vision and intent to advance inclusive excellence at the college level by focusing on the articulation of values. Following Hardiman et al.’s *Continuum on Becoming an Anti-Racist Multicultural Organization*, we described our ultimate goal to become a “fully inclusive anti-racist multicultural organization in a transformed society” (Hardiman et al., 2007; Crossroads Ministry, 2013, section 6).

We then described that in order to achieve this overarching goal, there must be an action plan in place. Our college and SJSU exists in a socio-cultural milieu of rapid change with emerging EDI-considerations at multiple policy levels. At the same time the federal government is challenging cultural and critical theory-informed training, the State of California is adopting ethnic studies curricular content requirements for undergraduates via Assembly Bill 1460 (Weber, 2020). Assembly Bill 1196 (Gipson, 2020) bans the statewide practice of the chokehold restraints by law enforcement. Title IX is an ever-evolving piece of legislation with recent changes as well. Our sister campus, CSU San Marcos, is championing land acknowledgement procedures via their recent, well-developed toolkit (CSU San Marcos American Indian Studies Department, 2019). As you can see, there are bright spots and positive developments, but the EDI environment is becoming more complex overall and we acknowledged these contextual issues.

Our team then brought in the perspectives of several of our professional organizations including NAFSA Association of International Educators, TESOL Association, and ALISE. NAFSA has defined the importance of EDI structures in education in their 2015 Diversity and Inclusion Statement:

> NAFSA honors the richness of human diversity and the essential power of discussion and collaboration across geographic and other boundaries. We affirm that engagement with the range of human beliefs, thoughts, and actions is an important element in global learning that fosters creativity, innovation, and excellence. It strengthens our capacity for constructive engagement to solve the world’s complex challenges. (NAFSA, 2015)

Advancing diversity via structures of inclusive excellence and by actively opposing systemic inequities are likewise central and critical components of TESOL International Association’s approach to educating the next generation of language professionals, as stated in their 2020 Statement on Racial Injustice and Inequity, “colleagues of color, their families, their friends, and
their students continue to be harmed by racism, discrimination, and xenophobia. Now is the time to come together and demand that this injustice finally stops” (Cutler, 2020, para. 4).

ALISE’s Diversity Statement describes several benefits to advancing diversity:

- Enhances access, attracts and retains diverse membership/personnel.
- Promotes equity and equal opportunity in the organization that lead to better membership satisfaction.
- Facilitates engagement among diverse people that enhances the educational, organizational and scholarly experiences.
- Promotes personal growth and enriches the organization and community.
- Introduces diverse ideas, perspectives, experiences and expertise that lead to improved, informed, creative and innovative problem solving and decision making.
- Opens up new opportunities and modes of discovery, pedagogy and practice.
- Fosters mutual respect by recognizing and valuing differences and commonalities, resulting in cross-cultural understanding.
- Creates an environment in which bias and inequities are not tolerated and compels change.
- Prepares professionals and leaders to work in an expanding, competitive global society.
- Makes for a robust and relevant organization in a diverse society. (ALISE, 2013, “Diversity Benefits” section)

We found the benefits articulated by the different fields not only thought-provoking and ambitious but an important gateway to describing the values of the college that would inform the action plan. As a working group, we were unanimous in our feeling that if stakeholders in CPGE work together to advance inclusive excellence, we will position ourselves strongly to:

1. Promote equity, eliminate bias, and facilitate inclusive engagement among students and colleagues from all backgrounds, including those that are under-represented or under-resourced.
2. Introduce innovative perspectives and expertise that promote strategic scholarly developments.
3. Prepare professionals to thrive in complex global contexts.

**Extending this activity: What libraries can do to articulate EDI values.**

This process of engaging in values articulation was our first activity, and it was an important one because it forced our team to clearly state vision for the project and describe the reasons why EDI matters so much in a language understood by all the fields and connected to the mission of every university and to CPGE in particular. For libraries, the departments, work areas, academic units can bring the voices of their own professional organizations and priorities of their critical subfields to these discussions. It is important that the values represent the voices of all the professionals in the library.

**Definition of Key Concepts**

CPGE did not yet have its own college-level EDI statement or a strategic action plan when the project started and, for this reason, key concepts associated with equity, diversity, and inclusion had not been formally expressed. Our team thought it was important to establish baseline language for use in the action plan and ongoing activities. We decided that the wider university’s efforts to begin this process were a good place to begin a discussion about language.
wide Commission on Diversity defines six key terms, domains of activity, and strategic indicators that characterize the university’s strategy to advance inclusive excellence:

1. **Diversity** is the active appreciation, engagement, and support of ALL campus members in terms of their backgrounds, identities, and experiences (as constituted by gender, socioeconomic class, political perspective, age, race, ethnicity, religion, sexuality, disability, regional origin, nationality, occupation, language, among others, and the intersection of these aspects). (*This definition emerged from SJSU campus members via focus groups*).

2. **Inclusive excellence** is an institutional commitment to create and sustain a context of diversity through which all members thrive, feel valued, and attain personal and professional success. One specific focus here is to utilize diversity as an educational resource and knowledge domain for students and as a central ingredient for their academic success.

3. **Institutional viability and vitality** are our capacity to plan, implement and assess a comprehensive diversity approach that aligns with our public mission.

4. **Education and scholarship** are the diversity content of our courses, faculty engagement with diversity issues and student learning related to diversity.

5. **Access and Success** are the success (retention, graduation, honors) of our various student populations by level (undergraduate and graduate), demographics (race, gender, ethnicity, income, etc.) and fields (the arts, business, education, science and technology).

6. **Campus climate and intergroup relations** are the individual and group social interactions among students, faculty, staff and perceptions of institutional commitment to diversity.

Also, influential for our team was University of California, Berkeley’s Center for Equity, Gender, and Leadership’s *Equity Fluent Leaders Glossary of Key Terms* (2019). “Equity” and “inclusion” are among the many terms they define, with the goal of building “equity fluency” (UC Berkeley Center for Equity, Gender, and Leadership, 2019).

1. **Equity** is the process of being treated fairly and impartially (see also gender equity).

2. **Inclusion** is providing equal opportunity to all people to fully engage themselves in creating an environment and a cultural attitude whereby everyone and every group fits, feels accepted, has value, and is supported by a foundation built on trust and mutual respect. (UC Berkeley Center for Equity, Gender, and Leadership, 2019)

**Extending this activity: What libraries can do to define key concepts in EDI.**

The definition of key concepts in EDI enabled us to, collectively, develop a mental model of the ideas and concepts needed to intellectually ground the rest of the data collection-oriented activities. The definitions also enabled us to communicate to CPGE’s community members just what these concepts mean when referenced in surveys and focus groups. Along similar lines, library teams working on developing action plans will find it useful to develop their own key definitions for messaging on their websites and in their assessment (e.g., surveys, focus groups, etc.) and action plan authoring activities. Future policies, procedures, and programming will also benefit from these critical definitions, keeping in mind that language will need to be updated in an ongoing fashion.

**Benchmarking.**
When our team embarked on the EDI climate assessment activities, we knew that some programs were already making efforts in this area and that uneven levels of activity were something that needed to be identified and responded to. With these differences in mind, we thought that the best way to understand our college’s current level of EDI activity would be to benchmark it against an already well-developed program of inclusive excellence associated with another university already on the road to implementing college unit-level structures.

To understand current CPGE EDI-related work practices and division of labor, we engaged in a community scan using a University of Michigan-inspired “EDI Check-up” document (Diversity, Equity & Inclusion: University of Michigan, n.d.). The community scan, using the activity and check-up document, was inspired by the University of Michigan’s dimensions of EDI activity that they identified as relevant to the EDI professionals currently working at the college/unit level (Grim et al, 2019.) These dimensions of EDI activity include activities and practices in the areas of Leadership, Programming, Faculty/Staff Engagement, and Student Engagement. With these practices in mind, we developed a baseline understanding of what CPGE is currently doing in these areas by recording what we found out (i.e., through communications with colleagues and study of CPGE documentation) in a check-up document in GoogleDocs.

**Extending this activity: How libraries can use benchmarking.**

We suspected that there was a general unevenness in the degree to which the individual programs and academic units (e.g., IG, ISSS, SAA, ADS, and iSchool) had developed their own EDI structures and the benchmarking activities confirmed it. Activities associated with the community scan also made visible that there were several gaps in CPGE’s EDI activities and enabled the team to address several of these items strategically in subsequent surveys and focus groups.

Along similar lines to our efforts to engage in benchmarking via community scanning activities, libraries can look outward to find other institutions that are further along in their own journeys toward inclusive excellence. Published case studies, organizational project reports, and professional communications at conferences are all viable outlets for libraries to find leaders in the field. Use their experiences as rubrics as you scan and assess your library’s current level of activity. As you look toward developing other assessment tools and activities, such as surveys and focus groups, consider what you have learned in your library’s “check-up” first. Your surveys and focus group questions will be more strategic and result in more useful information.

**Surveys of Leadership, Staff, and Students**

Our survey efforts consisted of instruments developed in Qualtrics and as a Google Form. The differences had to do with variations in expertise among team members. The *CPGE Leadership Survey: Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI)* online survey (in Google) was administered to all unit heads of the departments at CPGE and consisted of two sections: (a) an overview section to determine each department’s alignment (or lack thereof) with CPGE’s vision, mission and strategic goals; and (b) a review of existing activities in the areas of leadership, programming, and engagement with faculty, staff, and students. The questions were deliberately open-ended in an effort to help us gauge the unit heads’ abilities to articulate ways in which they are leading their department in the areas of EDI activities.

The faculty/staff/administrator survey, designed in Qualtrics, was sent out to all full-time employees (staff and faculty) of CPGE (approximately 90), part-time lecturers and student assistants, in order to gauge their understanding and perspectives on EDI issues.

Our team developed two student surveys in Qualtrics, with one containing specialized questions for Study Abroad and Away (SAA) students and the other primed to students in
International Student and Scholar Services (ISSS), International Gateways (IG), the Department of Applied Data Science (ADS), and the School of Information (iSchool). We analyzed 236 responses from the survey sent to all students in iSchool, ADS, IG, and ISSS (over 1000 students total).

Extending this activity: What libraries can use surveys as part of EDI assessments.

The surveys worked well in that they provided a 360 degree perspective on community members’ experiences of equity, diversity, and inclusion issues in the unit. Producing quantitative datasets which tied feedback to participant characteristics such as major, work function, ethnicity, and dimensions of diversity represented (to name a few). Open-ended questions resulted in rich quotes about EDI areas of concern and desired programming, courses, and training opportunities.

Libraries might take a similar approach to understanding staff perspectives on EDI issues, student experiences of the library and its services, and goals/activities associated with members of the leadership team. Analyzed together, these datasets will provide the quantitative evidence and rich qualitative portraits of community members needed to support EDI recommendations and future action plans.

Focus Groups

Extending our efforts to obtain faculty/staff feedback on diversity issues, we scheduled three sets of virtual focus groups via Zoom web-based conferencing. Workgroup members agreed upon five focus group questions, which were administered in three focus groups of 14 participants, led by two team members each. The two workgroup members responsible for each respective focus group then reviewed their Zoom session’s recordings, transcripts, and comments. One of the focus group leads integrated Poll Everywhere online activities into their focus groups and collected related responses.

Extending this activity: How libraries can use surveys as part of EDI assessments.

The strength of the focus groups was that once a question was asked, it was possible, like a town hall meeting, to have a conversation about answers, opinions, and problem solving. Brainstorming and “raising concerns” was part and parcel of the focus groups which added another set of findings to triangulate around as recommendations for action were considered. Libraries have a rich history of deploying focus groups to understand library usage and patron opinions on collections, programs, and services. Re-imaging focus groups to understand community needs around EDI issues is one simple step libraries can take to develop more evidence in support of any initiatives promoting inclusive excellence in their organizations. Technologies like Zoom make virtual focus groups possible while applications like Poll Everywhere create opportunities for gamification in responses and collective sharing/responding to questions in a rich, engaging environment.

Making Recommendations

We used the climate assessment activities relating to values articulation, defining key concepts, benchmarking, surveys, and focus groups to develop a diversity action plan. Structured as a strategic planning document includes five EDI Strategic Directions with related goals/objectives that are articulated as recommendations for action by specific dates within the college. We articulated several key performance indicators (KPIs) associated with each recommended objective to chart progress on stated goals. The KPIs have one or more individuals/groups tasked with each item and a timeline (e.g., due date or schedule such as annually or ongoing) for completion. In our particular case, the EDI strategic directions emerged in the realms of
leadership, programming and assessment, faculty and staff affairs, student affairs, new directions in EDI. The “new directions” strategic direction attempted to capture emerging issues in EDI that did not emerge from our dataset but are known issues to team members.

**Extending this activity: How libraries can make recommendations as part of an EDI action plan?**

When our team structured the action plan with KPIs designed to chart progress on objectives flowing from several strategic directions, it was with the intent to prime the entire deliverable for inclusion in strategic planning, program planning, and accreditation processes. Along these lines, the action plan is poised for easy insertion into ongoing program and college level in the hopes that equity, diversity, and inclusion concerns will become a normalized part of governance and program trajectories. Libraries should likewise seize the opportunity to structure their recommendations as strategic planning documents. Such efforts will support the sustainability of EDI efforts, thereby increasing the likelihood that proposed action plans are adopted.

**Conclusion**

Surprisingly, our team only had two months, from charge to due date, to execute our plans. Despite the short time period allotted for the delivery of this report, we were able to utilize a mixed methods approach, resulting in the analyses of several datasets that justified a hearty compilation of recommendations. Importantly, we were successful due to the strong support we received from our leadership team, colleagues, and students. Our project could have been improved if we had time to file a protocol with SJSU’s institutional review board (IRB), enabling dissemination of some of the rich data we cultivated. Libraries would do well to insert IRB coverage into their EDI assessment activities to support scholarly communication to the field. Ultimately, we feel strongly that the current analyses and recommendations are merely a starting point and look forward to the opportunity to deploy additional and ongoing college-level assessments as CPGE adopts new EDI structures in the future.

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Acknowledgements

Acknowledgment is extended to San Jose State University's College of Professional & Global Education and its associated programs and academic units for their continued support of the project written about in this report.
The Evolving Information Needs and Behaviors of Undergraduates

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Acknowledgements
This literature review was adapted from a research paper written originally in Professor Ellen Greenblatt’s course on Information Communities. Special thanks for her edits, suggestions, and encouragement. She is in the author's memory as a wonderful and impactful instructor whose passion and thoughtful comments was a driving force in this paper. In addition, this author would like to note that this review was researched, written, and submitted for publication before the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. As one of the SRJ editors pointed out, the question, "what are the information needs and behaviors of undergraduates?" has an even greater weight and importance now, with even more unknown factors and new permutations. There is now a greater emphasis on themes around emerging technologies, social media, and misinformation that makes the argument for improved (and decidedly critical) information literacy for undergraduates more emphatic, to a degree far beyond the scope of what this paper had set out to do. In a way, this literature review is already outdated; but hopefully, it can help bridge the gap between the research done and the much-needed work going forward.

Recommended Citation
Limas, B. (2020). The evolving information needs and behaviors of undergraduates. School of Information Student Research Journal, 10(2). http://scholarworks.sjsu.edu/slissrj/vol10/iss2/3

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The Evolving Information Needs and Behaviors of Undergraduates

Abstract
Undergraduates comprise a highly complex information community, composed of many identities and with a range of interests and skills. Emerging technologies continue to play a critical role in undergraduates’ information behaviors. While prior literature has focused on the academic information needs of students, emerging technologies have brought to light the considerable role of their everyday life information behaviors. This paper seeks to explore the information needs and behaviors of undergraduates, in particular the current and incoming graduating classes. With increased focus on meeting everyday life information needs and continued appreciation and understanding of the versatility of emerging technologies in the lives of undergraduates, libraries will increase their value to this information community and better meet their needs.

Keywords
undergraduates, information literacy, emerging technologies, social media, academic libraries, information behaviors

Acknowledgements
This literature review was adapted from a research paper written originally in Professor Ellen Greenblatt’s course on Information Communities. Special thanks for her edits, suggestions, and encouragement. She is in the author’s memory as a wonderful and impactful instructor whose passion and thoughtful comments was a driving force in this paper. In addition, this author would like to note that this review was researched, written, and submitted for publication before the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. As one of the SRJ editors pointed out, the question, “what are the information needs and behaviors of undergraduates?” has an even greater weight and importance now, with even more unknown factors and new permutations. There is now a greater emphasis on themes around emerging technologies, social media, and misinformation that makes the argument for improved (and decidedly critical) information literacy for undergraduates more emphatic, to a degree far beyond the scope of what this paper had set out to do. In a way, this literature review is already outdated; but hopefully, it can help bridge the gap between the research done and the much-needed work going forward.

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Brianna Limas (she/they) is an SJSU MLIS student and Spectrum Scholar focusing on academic libraries and information intermediation.

This article is available in School of Information Student Research Journal: https://scholarworks.sjsu.edu/ischoolsrj/vol10/iss2/3
Undergraduates, as an information community, constitute a wide array of identities, characteristics, and subgroups. There are a wide multiplicity of factors within the broader community of “undergraduates” one might consider: international students, DREAMers and immigrant students, LGBTQI+, students who are also parents, homeless students, students with disabilities, students from low-income backgrounds, humanities students, STEM students, art students, undeclared students, off-campus students, students in particular residence halls, students in fraternal organizations, and etc., ad infinitum. Few of these identities is mutually exclusive, and each one of these intersections might constitute an individual network of information-seekers. As such, undergraduates comprise a highly complex information community. More pressingly, studies have demonstrated that undergraduates are extremely novice researchers (Karas & Green, 2007), but that receiving help and support from the library and its staff can drastically increase the information retention of students and their professional success after graduation (Palumbo, 2016). It is therefore critical that information intermediators and library staff can address the multifaceted information needs of a manifold information community.

As Fisher and Bishop (2015) explain, drawing from Christen and Levinson’s four key angles of community, a single subset of undergraduates represents how communities can live and grow out of multiple dimensions of relatedness (e.g., departments, dorms, or extracurricular interests). For the undergraduate, their complex identities, overlapping associations and interests, questions about the future, and new explorations of self, set the stage for excitement as well as confusion and anxiety—all layered on top of their academic and scholarly pursuits. With these feelings, of course, come questions. Understanding the ever-changing information needs and behaviors of undergraduates requires a deeper understanding of their cohesion as an information community. This makes research into the information needs and behaviors of undergraduates, as a whole, integral to the success of both the students and the institutions that serve them.

Researching undergraduates requires a sensitivity and awareness to the multivalence of this group, but also a broader sense of the larger information needs and trends. In order to better understand the entire network of information flow and information behaviors prevalent throughout a campus community (which now also includes its online and distance learning community), undergraduates’ information needs can be looked at according to the technologies they use. This includes the technological, digital, and informational developments and challenges that are pertinent to a class during their time of study. An academic librarian working today certainly considers the information needs and behaviors of undergraduates within the context of Web 2.0 technologies, threats to digital privacy, and the proliferation of “fake news” and the need for increased information and critical information literacy training.

Emerging technologies play a tremendous role in the information needs and behaviors of undergraduates. At the same time, for information professionals and librarians in service to this community, there remain ever-complicating ethical and legal issues. This paper seeks to explore the information needs and behaviors of undergraduates, in particular the current and incoming graduating classes. A review of the current literature is followed by a description of the methodology used in secondary research on undergraduates, an analysis of the types of information needs and behaviors of undergraduates, and suggestions for future research. Finally, this paper will explore possible approaches to serving and meeting the information needs of today’s and tomorrow’s undergraduates.

**Literature Review**
Much of the research focusing on the information needs and behaviors of undergraduates is published by academic librarians and researchers working in the field. Both scholarly and professional approaches are common when writing about undergraduates. The literature reviewed here has been written using scholarly methodologies; however, several cornerstone professional writings, such as the Association of College and Research Library’s Standards for libraries in higher education (2012) and Framework for information literacy for higher education (2015), have been reviewed. Methodologies tend to include a mix of qualitative and quantitative data. The theoretical framework of information search process, formulated by Kulthi (1991), often comes into play, as does Bates’s (2010) theories on ‘berrypicking’ as information behavior.

Much of the research conducted on undergraduates has found that one of the greatest challenges they face in successful information-seeking is time. In attempting to use what is perceived to be the quickest and most accessible resources, these new researchers often omit print resources or other opportunities for discovery (Karas & Green, 2007). Another major issue in the information behavior of undergraduates is their level of information literacy, as undergraduates typically will either neglect to fact check or may purposefully leave out information that challenges their original assumptions or beliefs (Karas & Green, 2007; Whitmire, 2004). With increasing frequency, undergraduates and their generational cohort gather and create information via the internet, social media, and other technologies. When doing research, many assume that this will be adequate and will avoid the library altogether (Karas & Green, 2007). In the era of “fake news” and digital “echo chambers,” information literacy is not only a critical research skill for undergraduates’ academic success, but a life skill.

Due to the prevalence of social media, web-based information behavior, and other emerging technologies, the literature tends to focus on these particular aspects of undergraduates’ information behavior. One of the common themes addressed in the research is concerned with undergraduates’ information literacy, especially online and on specific platforms. For example, studies have been conducted looking specifically at the information behavior of undergraduate students using Google (Georgas, 2013), Twitter (Hassan, 2017), and Wikipedia (Selwyn & Gorard, 2016). Another common approach is to address how undergraduates seek out information across multiple platforms and contexts, and the criteria they use to establish validity (Karas & Green, 2007; Nicholas et al., 2009; Whitmire, 2004). Trembach and Deng (2018) found in their study concerning information literacy instruction that millennial and Gen Z learning styles need to be better understood and incorporated into information instruction design.

Because of the primacy of the researchers’ professional interests—teaching information literacy in a scholarly context—a concern for everyday information behavior only briefly emerges in the later literature. Indeed, Kim et al. (2014) conclude that information literacy—as a concept and as a standard for library instruction—must now extend “beyond simplistic and technical know-how” (p. 444) by going outside the bounds of purely academic information behavior. While some of these studies have attempted this (Georgas, 2013; Hassan, 2017; Kim et al., 2014), additional research on the non-academic information behavior of undergraduates would contribute to a “holistic approach,” which has been prescribed by Trembach and Deng (2018).

Methodology

In order to gain a foundational understanding of undergraduates as an information community, secondary searches focused on information behaviors of undergraduate students as a general category. Most queries were conducted in peer-reviewed journal databases, and most of the research on which this paper is built was found in journals related to library science and academic libraries. Additionally, as cornerstones designed to guide the information service provided to
undergraduates, papers from the Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL) were also included.

Academic librarianship is a well-established field within the information professions, and colleges and universities play a critical role in our social fabric. As a result, there is abundant research on undergraduates. Because of the fast-changing nature of the field and dynamics of this information community, this research has attempted to focus, where possible, on work produced in the last 5-10 years that is focused on emerging technologies, social media, and information literacy. The majority of the articles included have been published within the last 10 years, with the notable exception of some earlier foundational studies.

Academic papers and research studies were evaluated and compared in order to identify emerging trends in undergraduate information needs and behavior. This comparative and analytical approach was effective in assessing current services to undergraduates. Different models of the role of the internet versus traditional library services also become apparent. However, there remains a need for increased study in everyday life information behaviors.

Community-based information sources were also evaluated. Research on undergraduate information-seeking behaviors indicated that social networking sites like Twitter, YouTube, and Wikipedia are prominent in their popularity with undergraduates (Kim et al., 2014). Using this information, the author was able to explore these platforms for trending topics and popular accounts. As the undergraduate information community is extremely broad and includes a wide range of interests, it would be extremely difficult to pinpoint, for example, the most popular hashtags amongst undergraduates. This made narrowing down community-based information sources initially very difficult. After more careful evaluation of these platforms, this review of social media platforms was conducted through hashtags and social networking site pages that focused on topics relevant to issues that affect undergraduates in particular, such as student debt and school campus selection. As Hassan (2017) writes in his study of undergraduates on Twitter, hashtags promoting activism, social justice, and civic engagement, such as #blacklivesmatter, are also integral to the information behaviors of many undergraduates. This process revealed that patterns and trends in undergraduates’ engagement in community-based information sources can be difficult to anticipate and are subject to change according to the specific needs and cultural contexts of an individual student.

Discussion

Information Needs and Behaviors
Undergraduates are novice researchers who often are prone to being overconfident in their abilities to find information and evaluate its credibility. Often, undergraduates neglect library professionals and resources in the course of their studies; as a result, they miss out on valuable and useful information. Karas and Green (2008) found that students usually “fail to recognize that they may not have been researching properly” (p. 104) when obstacles arise in the research process.

At the same time, today’s undergraduate student body—generationally speaking, mostly comprised of millennials and Gen Z’ers—are regarded as being highly tech-savvy and active on social networking sites (Kim et al., 2014). Their engagement online fits a number of information behavior models. Research on undergraduates’ use and participation in the information activities of social media and the Internet are reinforced by Bates’s model of ‘berrypicking’ (Bates, 2010, “History” section). Additionally, many of the formats and features of popular social networking sites can help undergraduates engage in “information encountering” (Erdelez, 1999). By contrast, the information behavior of undergraduates engaging in academic research and course-related information-seeking more closely aligns with other theoretical models.
Many of the scholastic information needs of undergraduates seem to correlate to Belkin’s model of an ‘anomalous state of knowledge’ (Bates, 2010, “History” section), as they require extensive description that might not be readily accessible to new researchers like undergraduates. Another relevant model of understanding information needs would be Kuhlthau’s Information Search Process Model, especially as it pertains to students’ “conceptualization of a paper or project” as being “bound up in confusions and problems in searching for information” (Bates, 2010, “History” section). These two aspects of undergraduates’ information needs—the academic, and the everyday—necessitate very different approaches in understanding and evaluating the information behaviors of undergraduates.

**Academic Information Needs**

While undergraduates’ skill with emerging technologies is worthy of note, their primary objectives as students will be to successfully complete course assignments and, hopefully, pursue their intellectual interests with competence. Their familiarity with emerging technologies may obscure their own ability to self-assess their information needs and identify gaps in the information-seeking behaviors and strategies. When surveyed, undergraduate students often rate their research skills very highly, even while rating skills that they admittedly lack just as high (Nicholas et al., 2009).

In her 2004 study, Etheline Whitmire found that a student’s ability to synthesize conflicting information found online rested highly on their epistemological beliefs and reflective judgment. That is, those students who had a highly-developed attitude toward knowledge were better able to assess and utilize information from various sources, and those students with higher levels of reflective judgment had stronger criteria for assessing a source’s credibility. At the same time, Trembach and Deng (2018), in their review of the literature concerning information literacy instruction, found that Gen Y learning styles need to be better understood and incorporated into information instruction design. These findings would suggest that there is a wide array of factors—both individual, as with epistemological beliefs and reflective judgment, and cultural-generational—that influence the informational literacy and research skills of undergraduates.

At the same time, this “novice” level information community has developed several highly useful and effective information behaviors. In their everyday life information behavior, undergraduates are part of a generation of technology users and information seekers that are extremely adept. When applying their online skills to their academic work, there is evidence that undergraduates have developed a number of successful strategies. Selwyn and Gorard (2016) surveyed Australian students from public and private colleges and found that undergraduates made frequent use of Wikipedia, but recognized its limitations as a scholarly source. Instead, they used social networking service (SNS) as a study aid and as a jumping-off point to better understand a difficult topic. According to Selwyn and Gorard, Wikipedia also proved helpful for English-learner students.

Georgas’s (2013) research assessing students’ attitudes towards Google compared to library-based federated searching explores many of the dynamics at play when looking at undergraduates’ information behavior. Georgas surveyed students at the City University of New York, Brooklyn and found that students’ preference for Google was largely based on design. In fact, Georgas uses students’ survey responses to conclude that many students actually prefer library sources in many instances. The pull towards Google as a more frequent go-to for information was based on “efficiency and ease of use, but they recognize...Google’s limitations” (p. 181). While concerns for students’ information literacy online is justified, it should also take into consideration the vast arsenal of effective, useful techniques that millennials and Gen Y’ers have developed for themselves.
**Everyday Life Information Needs**

There is new and growing interest in studying the everyday information needs and behaviors of undergraduates, particularly as it plays out across emerging technologies. Without a doubt, there is tremendous overlap between a student’s “academic” and “everyday” life. However, traditional studies of undergraduates tend to regard undergraduate information behavior as activities that pertain directly towards that student’s coursework. Yet a survey of the types of content being created, shared, and accessed by undergraduates (and soon-to-be undergraduates) reveals deeper layers of their information behavior.

For example, a growing trend on YouTube, a popular site amongst undergraduates (Kim et al., 2014), is videos that reveal campus “hotspots,” tour dorm rooms, or in which community members discuss which college they will attend and why they chose it (Go Beyond The Brochure, 2015). YouTube could be a useful tool in helping a freshman or transfer student learn how to navigate their new environment, as well as satisfying other information needs.

Additionally, Hassan (2017) looked at African and African-American students on Twitter and concluded that this SNS has the potential for highly positive information behavior for students, noting uses for mental health access and democratic activism. In their 2014 survey of undergraduates’ social media use, Kim et al. describe the usefulness of SNS as platforms for collaborative information sharing, creation, and identifying local news stories not presented in mainstream media outlets. They conclude, “If used properly and with care, social media can be powerful and transformative tools” (Kim et al., 2014, p. 444). Contrary to some of the more alarmist sentiments regarding emerging technologies, their incorporation into the information behaviors of undergraduates represents an exciting opportunity to encounter and exchange useful information in new, transformative ways.

**Information Literacy**

Nonetheless, social media and networking sites present new, hefty challenges to information literacy. Kim et al. (2014) point out that the one-click sharing features of many social networking sites drastically increase the dissemination of misinformation. As a result, new approaches in teaching and evaluating information literacy instruction are required in order to address the evolving needs and behaviors of undergraduates. The availability of digital resources for undergraduates has allowed increased access to information. However, this information community, while highly adept in some ways, still lacks some of the basic skills for information literacy (Karas & Green, 2007; Kim et al., 2014; Whitmire, 2004).

Newer research on the information behaviors of undergraduates contains strong recommendations for incorporating emerging technologies into information literacy instruction, rather than struggling against them. Georgas (2013) expresses the need to introduce higher-level information literacy skills but also “revisit some lower-level information literacy skills as well,” (p. 181) such as unpacking citations and identifying types of information sources. A new school of thought seems to unfold here: emerging technologies and SNS, rather than being purely detrimental to information literacy and undergraduates’ information behavior, can be better understood and used by information professionals to teach information literacy skills. Design, user experience, and a holistic understanding of information behaviors (not just information-seeking) are integral to this approach to information literacy and information behavior. Kim et al. (2014) suggest that the rise of emerging technologies, with both their obstacles and benefits, have created a new opportunity to redesign information literacy for undergraduates—one that better understands everyday-life information-seeking.
As information professionals seek to better understand the learning styles and epistemological beliefs of students (Trembach & Deng, 2018; Whitmire, 2004), so should they attempt to better understand the challenges and possibilities presented by emerging technologies. Georgas (2013) recommends that library search tools emulate Google in their design and functionality; Selwyn and Gorard (2016) suggest that classrooms and libraries can teach students how to not only assess but contribute to information on Wikipedia; Hassan (2017) advocates for the vital role that SNS play in information communities and promotes Twitter as a tool to enhance student-professor communication. To go further, Nicholas et al. (2009) have advocated for a focus on “Virtual Scholar studies;” their research points to the growing importance of design and in-depth understanding of the vast tools of the internet when approaching information literacy.

**Conclusion**

As the information community of undergraduates includes a broad, complex body of various identities and interests, so too do their information needs and behaviors range from the fixedly academic, to the eclectic and everyday life. Researching a thesis, learning how to properly cite a source, or understanding career options in their major remain constant information needs for this community, even with the generational changes, individual interests, or shifts in technology. While this scholarly focus continues to be of primary interest for academic librarians serving undergraduates, the interplay of their everyday information needs and the role of emerging technologies play an increasingly vital part in how undergraduates engage with information and their information behavior.

In fact, scholarly institutions and information professionals might do well to learn from SNS and emerging technologies in order to better serve undergraduates, while striving to take a “holistic approach” to meeting information needs (Tremback & Deng, 2018). While more research is needed in order to better understand the everyday life information needs and behaviors of undergraduates, a number of libraries have already begun to consider the whole student and their everyday life in order to better serve all of their information needs. In a study of effective academic library outreach strategies, librarian Carrie Girton (2018) discusses the effectiveness of “empathetic marketing.” This strategy includes promotional outreach of library services that is contextualized in an understanding of issues that might be affecting the student body. For example, library promotions might speak to understanding the pressures of finals or the difficulties of being a distance learner (Girton, 2018). Such strategies help to bridge the gap between academic and everyday life information needs, making the library a more available and relevant information resource for undergraduates.

Academic libraries have historically been, and continue to be, cornerstone fixtures in the intellectual lives and success of undergraduates. However, as emerging technologies and other socio-cultural factors press in and continue to change our social fabric, so too must academic libraries adapt and evolve in order to remain relevant and accessible in the lives of students. While many libraries have done exceedingly well in updating their physical and virtual spaces, expanding online databases, and using new technologies, one of the most pressing needs is a deeper, more complex understanding of the everyday life information needs and behaviors of undergraduates.

In order to meet the wide-ranging information needs of undergraduates, academic libraries and librarians must become readily adaptable. Additionally, we must present ourselves as relevant to more than their strictly course-related activities. By doing so, libraries and academic librarians will be better situated to engage with undergraduates on the needs they do not even realize they have, such as developing their information literacy and research skills. With increased focus on meeting everyday life information needs and continued appreciation and understanding of the
versatility of emerging technologies in the lives of undergraduates, libraries will increase their value to this information community.

References


Book Review: Public Library Collections in the Balance: Censorship, Inclusivity, and Truth, Jennifer Downey

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Acknowledgements
I thank Professor Johanna Tunon for her encouragement to review Public Library Collections in the Balance.

Recommended Citation
http://scholarworks.sjsu.edu/slissrj/vol10/iss2/4

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Book Review: Public Library Collections in the Balance: Censorship, Inclusivity, and Truth, Jennifer Downey

Keywords
collection management, diversity, intellectual freedom, censorship

Acknowledgements
I thank Professor Johanna Tunon for her encouragement to review Public Library Collections in the Balance.

About Author
Carrie Kitzmiller graduated with her MLIS from San Jose State University in May of 2020. She is currently working as a Population Health Specialist for a nonprofit healthcare organization.

There are 59 Library and Information Science graduate programs in the United States that are accredited by the American Library Association (ALA), and fewer than half offer courses that center around the issues of censorship and intellectual freedom. If such courses are available, they are offered as electives, rather than the core courses that author Downey believes they should be. Her stated purpose in writing Public Library Collections in the Balance: Censorship, Inclusivity, and Truth is to fill that gap and to serve as an impetus for contemplation and conversation around issues with which public librarians will inevitably be confronted.

Author Downey is well-positioned to write on this topic. She currently works as a reference librarian in Redlands, California. She holds a Master of Library and Information Science (MLIS) degree from San Jose State University and has been published in the journals Progressive Librarian and Reference & User Services Quarterly. Her published work delves into LGBTQ information needs and challenges to materials that are centered on this community. In Public Library Collections in the Balance, she puts her passion for diversity and inclusivity in public libraries at the forefront. She acknowledges that the book will prompt more questions than answers and ends each chapter with a thought-provoking “What Would You Do?” case study. There are no easy answers. Librarians and MLIS students may find themselves contemplating how they would handle the difficult situations that censorship presents.

Downey begins with the history of American public library censorship. In the early years of the public library system and until the 1930s, censorship, or at least careful selection based on value rather than public demand, was seen as one of the basic duties of the public librarian. It was not until the controversy over Steinbeck’s The Grapes of Wrath that the ALA finally determined that access would be a core principle of the profession. Downey gives a good overview of advances in intellectual freedom from that point on, including the adoption of the Library Bill of Rights, the establishment of the Office of Intellectual Freedom, and the fight over the Children’s Internet Protection Act (CIPA) of 2003. This section serves as a good foundation for the information in the following chapters.

The next section deals with what types of public library materials are frequently challenged and the reasons. Downey gives a very good explanation of the concept of in loco parentis; then delineates the ALA’s stance on the intellectual freedom and first amendment rights of minors. It should be noted that this concept applies to school librarians but not to public librarians. There is a section explaining the dangers of putting quality, content, or warnings labels on library materials and restricting access to items based on content or age of the library user. The author also examines the connection between challenges and the racial, ethnic, sexual, and gender identities of the characters within the challenged materials.

Downey gives the topic of CIPA and internet filtering in public libraries a chapter of its own. The section provides an excellent explanation of why some people feel it is imperative to filter the internet in public libraries, the downside of internet filtering, its effects on economically challenged patrons with no internet access in the home, and the financial reasons why so many public libraries feel they have no choice but to filter. The author shares clear guidelines on internet policy, maximizing information access, and the possible inherent biases present in commercial filtering software.

In the fourth chapter, “Media Matters,” the author discusses the way motion picture and video game ratings are often used in public libraries to deny access to minors. The issue of “juvenile-
only” library cards is examined. While Downey acknowledges the reasons, some public libraries have for using such age-related distinctions, she also gives the ALA position that having such a policy constitutes censorship.

After these preliminary chapters that lay out the current issues with censorship and intellectual freedom in public libraries, Downey gets down to more practical matters. The second half of the book contains valuable insight and information for those working in public libraries and those who plan to in the future. Her instruction on how to prevent and prepare for challenges is essential. The author gives librarians step-by-step information to create a strong collection development policy, staff training to deal with patrons issuing a complaint, and access to professional resources dealing with challenges.

Downey continues with a section on community analysis with regard to collection development. Her warning that community analysis can often lead to collections geared solely toward the demographic majority of a user group is timely and important. She exhorts librarians to continue to assess their community and to take the time to get to know the minority populations and subgroups in order to ensure that their information needs are also being met.

The next section addresses the tricky topic of self-censorship by librarians. Downey provides a clear distinction between selection and self-censorship, explaining that the latter is when a librarian seeks out reasons to exclude certain materials. She acknowledges the reasons why many librarians engage in self-censorship: the desire to avoid complaints and challenges, personal discomfort with subject matter, and/or fear of judgment. The necessity of confronting one’s personal biases, having a strong and detailed collection development policy, and training to support library staff is addressed to help diminish self-censorship. Downey asserts the importance of library staff feeling supported in their collection development policies and decisions, which will lead to more confidence and less self-censorship.

In chapter eight, Downey examines the debate between quality and demand in library collections, especially with regard to controversial and conspiracy-driven material. She weighs the issue of giving library patrons access to the materials they want, while also examining the necessity of creating diverse, inclusive collections.

The final chapter gives public library staff and administrators clear and concise advice on what to do when the library receives a complaint or a challenge. She discusses the four levels of complaints and/or challenges: expressions of concern, written grievances, public attacks, and calls for censorship. This chapter contains vital information for librarians who will almost inevitably be faced with these types of scenarios at some point in their careers. The author explains what a review process should look like after a complaint or challenge has been made, how to prepare for and conduct a hearing on a challenged item, and how to communicate final decisions to the complainant and the public at large. She gives librarians practical advice on remaining calm, avoiding defensiveness, and using active listening when dealing with contentious patrons. She concludes with instructions on requesting assistance from the ALA Office of Intellectual Freedom.

Downey’s epilogue looks to the future, especially with the recent trend toward more censorship and conservative challenges. This final section exhorts librarians to adhere to the Library Bill of Rights and the Freedom to Read statement, to keep the focus on equity of access, and to continue their own personal education with regard to diversity and inclusivity in public library collections. The two appendixes to the volume contain valuable source lists of where collection developers can find LGBTQ-friendly and diverse books from small and alternative presses.

While Downey does not address the philosophical or theoretical issues surrounding censorship and diversity, this book is an extremely valuable resource for public librarians and
library science students. If public libraries are to fulfill their mandate to serve the entirety of their communities, having diverse, inclusive collections is essential. *Public Library Collections in the Balance* gives librarians a practical guide for a strong collection development policy and addressing the complaints and challenges that too often follow when embracing diversity. While Downey’s book gives librarians a firm foundation on racial, ethnic, gender, and sexual diversity, future research should include an examination of diversity in ability and how to address the needs of patrons with disabilities.

Reference

December 2020

Book Review: A Matter of Facts: The Value of Evidence in an Information Age

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Acknowledgements

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Book Review: A Matter of Facts: The Value of Evidence in an Information Age

Acknowledgements
N/A

About Author
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This review is available in School of Information Student Research Journal: https://scholarworks.sjsu.edu/ischoolsrj/vol10/iss2/5

Laura A. Millar’s *A Matter of Facts* poignantly stresses the need for substantiated evidence to support facts. The book poses the question, how do we, the recordkeepers, hold institutions, governments, and individuals accountable for their actions? Her mantra throughout the book can be reflected in one statement, “We don’t need facts alone. We need evidence” (2019, p. 20). As Millar suggests, society cannot respect the rule of law if we do not first demand trustworthiness from institutions and individuals that disseminate information. Millar in this work as well as her previous works like *Archives: Principles and Practices* stress that truth and fact rely on the accurate, unbiased nature of pointing to unfettered evidence (2017). *Archives* touches more intently on this theme—evidence and archives’ role in upholding the integrity of records. Through her 35 years of experience as a records and archives consultant, Millar has also published other works related to archives including the 1988 work, *A Manual for Small Rural Archives* and the 2009 work, *The story behind the book: Preserving Authors’ and Publishers’.* Evidence is foundational in our understanding of events and provides accountability for governments, organizations, and individuals. In a time where information manipulation readily corrupts and sways society in processing events, this work conveys expediency in safeguarding evidence from bad actors. Information professionals represent the front line in securing raw data, validating resources, and educating communities on distinguishing truths from lies. However, Millar believes the recordkeeper, the information professional, represents only one component, which requires a community effort to find solutions to protect evidence, particularly in the Digital Age.

*A Matter of Facts* addresses the precarious nature of evidence, particularly born-digital data, in the contemporary geopolitical landscape of the United States and beyond. It is comprised of ten chapters that espouse the importance of evidence, why evidence serves a critical role in authenticating information, and the dangers evidence poses when manipulated to serve nefarious agendas. In a post-truth society, access to evidence ensures the validity of facts. Millar posits that physical records, which remain static in form and distribution—and therefore unaltered or manipulated—are perceived more trustworthy than digital records. Though these records can be readily destroyed or rendered inaccessible to wide audiences or subjected to unreliable authors that employ censorship or omissions to protect themselves, Millar’s greater concern focuses on digital content. Millar argues born-digital evidence plays a role in the accountability of others remains at risk of compromise not only from individuals, but also the processes of capturing and storing evidence. *A Matter of Facts* highlights the Information Age’s immeasurable importance on the exchange of ideas, news, and society; and the book serves as a cautionary statement regarding the security and access to evidence.

The first half of the book focuses on evidence, how it is derived, and how evidence shapes identity and memory. Technology advances our connectedness and the content available to Web users; however, the validity of that content is always in question. Millar prefaced early in the work stated, “we live in an age when too many people prefer feelings over facts” (2019, p. 20). Too often information shared by users on social media platforms adhere to emotion rather than vetting the veracity of the source, which often warp our sense of the truth. Millar determines that political pundits as well as the American president frequently manipulate truths, which propound their political agenda. Beyond the accountability of bureaucrats and politicians, Millar directs readers to the importance of evidence for identity. In Chapter 5, she writes on the burgeoning ancestry databases and DNA test kits that help evidence heritage and authenticate our family histories and
Millar briefly mentions the African Diaspora, immigration, and 20th and 21st century refugee crises as clear examples when the channels to evidence have been interrupted or destroyed, resulting in a destructive effect imparted on one’s identity. Millar uses ancestry in this section to evidence that not everyone can easily discover their heritage and that displaced peoples are disproportionately affected to access records that support identity.

The second half of the book directs the reader’s attention to the fragility and vulnerability of digital information through intentional attacks on source integrity or manipulation of evidence. She highlighted examples such as Andrew Wakefield’s infamous *Lancet* article on the MMR vaccine as the cause of autism, leading misguided readers of the statistics supporting these conclusions. Furthermore, Millar writes on privacy concerns, particularly whistleblowers that can be viewed, by some, as information liberators. However, Millar cautions that data leakage can be taken out of context and misconstrue audiences’ interpretations of that data. Also, hackers can seize data or hold it hostage such as the WannaCry ransomware that attacked over 230,000 computers worldwide (2019, p. 104). In Chapter 9, she directs readers to society’s perceived assumptions of the security and collection of evidence as well as the technology used to preserve these materials. In the concluding chapter, Millar suggests addressing recordkeeping guidelines for politicians, changing the law to support those guidelines, and a community effort to ensure accountability.

Overall, *A Matter of Facts*’ relevancy in the Post-Truth era alerts readers to the precarious nature of digital information. The work reaffirms information professionals’ responsibility in this respect—securing and providing information to those who seek it. However, Millar directs this cause not only for the recordkeeper but society. Throughout the book, Millar delivers insightful dialogue on recordkeeping with carefully crafted supporting evidence. Millar’s well-written discourse, ample citations, and appendix list of resources provide readers with a firm foundation for further reading. Although it should be noted that for how rich and powerful Millar’s words emanate, this remains an introduction to the topic of evidence-based truth. *A Matter of Facts*’ scope covers a large area in less than 200 pages; therefore, readers need to rely on the further reading and citations to find more detailed information. With no sense of irony, another comparable work with a similar name, *The Matter of Facts: Skepticism, Persuasion, and Evidence in Science* promotes comparable information as Millar; however, the authors, Gareth and Rhodri Leng take a deeper dive into the methodology for scientific research and experimental evidence. Therefore, both works factor the relationship of evidence to authenticity. However, as Millar’s work offers an overview of evidence throughout society, the Lengs’ study directs readers on the importance of evidence in the scientific community. Further, the concise readability injunction with Millar’s riveting writing style make for a quick and engaging read. Finally, *A Matter of Facts* is an excellent book not only for information professionals, but anyone with a passion and interest for recordkeeping.

References


Rural Outreach Services Enrich Seniors’ Lives

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Rural Outreach Services Enrich Seniors’ Lives

Keywords
library outreach, rural public libraries, seniors

Acknowledgements
About Author
Claire C. Goldstein graduated with an MLIS from San Jose State University in May 2020.

Structured Abstract

Objective – To investigate the information needs of senior rural public library users and the impact of outreach services on their lives.

Design – Qualitative case study.

Setting – A rural Appalachian public library system in Virginia.

Subjects – Twenty-four seniors who attended community social groups receiving outreach services and six library staff members with in-depth knowledge of outreach services.

Methods – The seniors participated in four focus groups at two locations, with each focus group comprising six participants. Staff members were given semi-structured narrative interviews. Question guides, field-note templates, audio recording, and transcription were all used to gather accurate data. Grounded theory principles as well as open, axial, and selective coding were employed to isolate themes and categories within participant responses for data analysis.

Main Results – Analysis isolated three major areas of need for service users:

- entertainment and intellectual stimulation
- transportation and mobility issues
- technology and internet access

There was a gap between service users’ and staff members’ perception of user needs. Staff identified internet access as a serious issue, while users expressed little interest in technology. Users emphasized their desire for entertainment, while staff were less focused on this area of need. Both users and staff expressed concern about lack of or limited transportation as a barrier to information access. With regard to impact, it was found that outreach services provided significant positive impacts for elder users; most notably increased quality of life, social outlets, and connection to the wider community via the library as a community center.

Conclusion – The researcher argued that this study demonstrates the library outreach services’ ability to meet users’ needs and positively impact their lives.

Commentary

This study joins overlapping bodies of literature on senior library users, outreach services, and rural public libraries. As populations in the United States and worldwide continue to age, seniors are becoming an increasingly significant subset of library users. Although providing information access, programs, and services to this diverse and often multiply disadvantaged population is a growing concern, research on the effectiveness of current library services for older adults remains limited. Like the library system in this study, over 40% of U.S. public libraries are both small and rural (Swan et al., 2013). Some evidence suggests, though inconclusively, that U.S. rural libraries tend to both have
larger senior user populations and target fewer services toward them (Lenstra et al., 2019, p. 740). All libraries that serve older adults can benefit from understanding their specific needs and the ways to better meet them; but such research is especially beneficial for smaller libraries with fewer resources such as rural public libraries. In an era when many libraries have to fight tooth and claw for funding, it is necessary both to demonstrate the value of library services and ensure that the services provided are appropriate and efficient.

Assessed per Glynn’s (2006) critical appraisal checklist, and as the author indicates, there are several significant limitations to this study. The small sample size was one drawback. Participants were drawn from a weekly social group, restricting the evaluation to the number of those in attendance. Not being homebound or residing in an assisted living facility were prerequisites to participate in the study, which leaves out a considerable portion of seniors who do fit those categories and are in need of receiving outreach services. Furthermore, only one case study was conducted because of “limitations of scope and time” (p. 374). Future directions for research are infrequently discussed; with the concentration focused instead on showing the existing program’s worth.

An interesting standout in the results is the disparity in perceptions between service users and library staff on the topic of technology and internet access. While staff expressed that technological access was an important concern for seniors, users focused much more on the value of entertainment and intellectual stimulation (e.g., books, puzzles, movies, etc.) that they would not be able to access without the library. Technology cropped up as a general concern twice, and as a specific concern in relation to one user’s preference for e-readers; again, tying into the theme of entertainment (p. 380). These findings indicate that rural public library systems with similar user populations may wish to reassess their senior services, determining whether they should shift resources from technological access to entertainment options. Also brought into focus, are the roles that technology and internet access play for older adults in general—what they want them for and how they use them. How should library services look in a community where seniors mostly use the internet as a source of entertainment, versus one where they mostly use it for email communication, health information, or shopping? Further study could elucidate these questions.

References

