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Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Analysis Tools for Timely Audits: Two Case Studies of Carlsbad Libraries

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Abstract

When libraries explore how their youth collections can be more diverse, equitable, and inclusive (DEI), it is beneficial to first identify where representation gaps exist amongst their holdings. Digital DEI audit tools can quickly target areas for improvement. The following studies use digital instruments to analyze the DEI representation in two youth library collections in Carlsbad, California. The fiction picture book collections were probed at both a Carlsbad elementary school in Encinitas Union School District (EUSD) and the Georgina Cole public library (Cole). Three digital instruments were used: Diverse BookFinder Collection Analysis Tool, TeachingBooks Collection Analysis Toolkit, and collectionHQ Diversity Analysis Tool. The results were compared to local demographics. The purpose of the audits was to answer: To what degree do these collections represent diverse populations? The author found that diverse populations are underrepresented in each collection and some groups have no representation at all. Most books with diverse representation lack variety and often do not connect the story to the identity or cultural experience of the diverse characters featured.

Keywords

Acknowledgements

About Author

Sarah Wilson (she/her/hers) received a Master of Library and Information Science from San José State University in 2022. She holds a B.A. in Theatre from the University of California, San Diego. Sarah is a member of ALA, CLA, and REFORMA. She currently works as a Library Media Assistant at an elementary school.

Introduction

A *Library Journal* survey of public libraries in 2022 shared a "need to ensure that collections reflect voices previously ignored due to racism and other structural biases" (Wyatt, 2022). To tackle this need, organizations may attempt to make their collections more diverse, equitable, and inclusive, often shortened to DEI. Diversity connotes an ample representation of various people. Equity acknowledges the presence and gaps in diversity, striving for fairness for all groups and supporting the distinct needs of specific individuals. Inclusion avoids homogeneity, considering a variety of components that make up a person's identity such as race, culture, gender, gender expression, sexual orientation, mental and physical ability, religion, and socioeconomic status. Raimi et al. (2022) define these terms in the workplace with diversity being a "deliberate recognition, acceptance and accommodation of different individuals," equity granting "fair access to opportunities and respectful treatment," and inclusion extending "opportunities and other resources" to "excluded, marginalized and minority groups" (p. 27). Diversity, equity, and inclusion are interdependent. Acknowledging all three is vital when developing strategic measures to improve collection representation at an institution. This article focuses on DEI analyses of youth library materials.

The following research includes two case studies examining DEI representation in youth library collections in Carlsbad, California. One study investigated the fiction picture books at a Carlsbad elementary school in the Encinitas Union School District (EUSD). The other analyzed the fiction picture book collection at Georgina Cole Library (Cole), a public branch within the Carlsbad City Library (CCL). The studies explored the degree to which these libraries' youth picture book collections represent diverse populations in Carlsbad.

The author conducted a diversity audit of these two libraries using Diverse BookFinder and TeachingBooks. At Cole, collectionHQ was used as well. Each tool disclosed a wealth of information and all of them had their own strengths and limitations. The analyses primarily focused on race and cultural representation. At both institutions, Diverse BookFinder showed that less than 10% of the collections had diverse content, even though the total percentage of racial diversity in the community is significantly higher. TeachingBooks showed that, on average, 1% or less of diverse identities are represented in the collections. The non-White[1] Carlsbad community totals 37.7%, but only 18.2% of Cole's fiction picture book collection was flagged for DEI content by collectionHQ. There is a lack of representation of First/Native Nations and Middle Eastern/North African populations in both collections. The EUSD school also had no Bi/Multiracial/Mixed Race books. Additional diverse identity markers beyond race appear to have low representation as well. For example, 14% of the school's students identified as having a disability in 2020-2021, but TB reported that there

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[1] "White" is capitalized here and throughout the article because *The SRJ* follows the formatting guidelines in APA 7th Edition. However, the author acknowledges that this is part of a larger, evolving discussion in Library and Information Science. Just looking at the 20 articles cited in this manuscript, only 5 capitalize "White" in the body of the authors' work. Nine of the articles do not use an upper-case "w" for "white", even though they capitalize racial and cultural groups elsewhere. In these 9 articles, "White" is only capitalized when referenced in data or lists.

were no books at the elementary school with this representation and less than 1% of books have this content at Cole. cHQ revealed that it only represents .6% of the Cole collection. The collection data primarily focused on *who* is represented, but Diverse BookFinder also captured *how* racial groups were represented in each collection. Most of the diverse books at both libraries do not connect the story to the race and culture of the characters featured. Diverse BookFinder explains that this type of story could feature "any child," where swapping a different character into the plot would not cause significant change (Diverse BookFinder, 2023c). If this representation of diverse groups in picture books at each library continues to dominate, diverse youth may only see their experiences partially mirrored in literature, and community cultural understanding opportunities may be missed. Oppression and resilience stories are lacking for most groups, particularly Latinx which is the highest racial demographic in Carlsbad after White. This absence could give the impression that Latinx groups do not experience these challenges. These audits reveal that both Carlsbad libraries have a small sampling of picture books that feature diverse characters and need a wider variety of stories that fully explore their experiences.

DEI Relevance

Why is DEI important for youth collections? Dr. Rudine Sims Bishop, an education expert, coined an analogy that compared children's books to "mirrors, windows, and sliding glass doors" (Bishop, 1990). Her quote is heavily featured in DEI scholarly work:

> Books are sometimes windows, offering views of worlds that may be real or imagined, familiar or strange. These windows are also sliding glass doors, and readers have only to walk through in imagination to become part of whatever world has been created or recreated by the author. When lighting conditions are just right, however, a window can also be a mirror. Literature transforms human experience and reflects it back to us, and in that reflection we can see our own lives and experiences as part of the larger human experience. Reading, then, becomes a means of self-affirmation, and readers often seek their mirrors in books. (Bishop, 1990, p. ix)

The "human experience" referenced by Bishop has an infinite number of stories to tell. However, the reality is that certain groups of people have a lot more story representation than others in literature and media. Novelist Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie (TED, 2009) adds that when unique stories are lacking, the narrative about a demographic could trend toward a stereotype. Even if the story that emerges is authentic, originating from the demographic itself, if it dominates the media it can lead to misconceptions about a group. When multiple stories of diverse demographics are shared, it helps avoid the "danger of a single story" (TED, 2009). Henderson et al. (2020) noticed this gap of "intersecting identities" when they learned that Timothy, a seven-year-old Black student, showed an interest in inquisitive characters like Curious George, but an audit revealed there were no books that mirrored that young Black boy's experience (p. 747). All the stories in

Timothy's classroom with Black individuals were nonfiction books about the civil rights movement (Henderson et al., 2020).

What can libraries do to ensure their collections have diverse and inclusive content? They can conduct an audit to identify any equity gaps, thus revealing where improvement is needed. According to a survey by *Library Journal* in 2022, in which 131 public libraries responded, "46% of respondents have conducted a diversity audit to evaluate holdings" (Wyatt, 2022, p.30). This figure is up compared to a similar survey by *Library Journal* in 2019 in which only 9% had undertaken a diversity audit (Vercelletto, 2019). If this increase in DEI collection audits continues, libraries may need to draft a systematic plan to evaluate *who* exactly is depicted in their library collections and *how* they are represented. Learning about cultural competency, collaborating with community groups, finding DEI-related resources, and focusing on existing gaps in representation will help reach these objectives.

Background

The author chose EUSD and Cole for case studies because of her association with each organization as a student intern while earning a Master of Library and Information Science.

Encinitas Union School District (EUSD)

Mission, Strategic Plan, and Site Information. Encinitas Union School District (EUSD) serves students enrolled in kindergarten through 6th grade (Encinitas Union School District, n.d.-a). The school district is committed to improving DEI practices at all its sites. The word "diverse" is in EUSD's mission statement:

> Our mission is to assist our children to value learning and to be successful in school, society, and work by providing a challenging and nurturing learning experience. We work in partnership with family and community preparing children to be leaders in a diverse, ever-changing world. (Encinitas Union School District, n.d.-b)

Goal 5 in EUSD's Local Control and Accountability Plan is to provide "exemplary programs, a wide variety of high-quality learning resources, and engaging opportunities to provide personalized learning for the unique needs of diverse groups" (Encinitas Union School District, 2021-2022a). EUSD developed an Equity Committee in 2018 to help address cultural diversity initiatives for the organization. The district's Board of Trustees adopted a policy saying "the district shall proactively identify class and cultural biases as well as practices, policies, and institutional barriers that negatively influence student learning, perpetuate achievement gaps, and impede equal access to opportunities for all students" (Encinitas Union School District, 2018). Along with developing periodic equity training for all staff members, the Equity Committee garnered feedback from former students of diverse identities. This dialogue revealed experiences with racial

slurs and microaggressions on campus. The students shared feelings of disconnectedness with their school community due to a lack of representation of their identity. At the end of the 2021-2022 school year, the district added an extra $1,000 to its library budgets to purchase materials that increase the story representation of diverse groups. It renewed these funds for each library the following year. Among the many steps which have improved DEI within the district, some libraries began conducting collection diversity audits in 2021.

This study examined one of the EUSD schools that is situated in Carlsbad, CA. Total enrollment for the 2020-2021 School Year was 599 (Encinitas Union School District, 2021-2022b). At the time of this study, a certified teacher librarian supervised all the district libraries. The individual locations are managed by Library Media Assistants. This particular EUSD school has a spacious and inviting library that houses roughly 14,000 physical materials. Here is a breakdown of the school-age children demographics at this location:

> 44.4 % Female
> 55.6 % Male
> 0.2 % American Indian or Alaska Native
> 5.8 % Asian
> 0.8 % Black or African American
> 2.3 % Filipino
> 15 % Hispanic or Latino
> 4 % Two or More Races
> 69.8 % White
> 3.2 % English Learners
> 0.5 % Homeless
> 9.7% Socioeconomically Disadvantaged
> 14 % Student with Disabilities (School Accountability, 2020-2021).

Carlsbad City Library (CCL) and the Georgina Cole Branch (Cole)

Mission, Vision, Strategic Framework, and Site Information. The mission, vision, and strategic framework do not touch on any specifics regarding DEI. However, the library was very supportive of the author's audit for this research paper. The following are Carlsbad City Library (CCL)'s mission and vision statements:

> Mission
> Carlsbad City Library provides community members of all ages with convenient access to high quality resources and services to inform and enrich individual and community life.

> Vision
> Carlsbad City Library is the destination for information, enjoyment of reading, lifelong learning, and cultural enrichment for those who live, work and play in Carlsbad. (Carlsbad City Library, n.d.)

The desired outcomes in CCL's strategic framework are to help "advance" a "resourceful, resilient, prospering," and "inspired community" (City of Carlsbad, 2016).

CCL comprises three branches: Dove, Georgina Cole (Cole), and the Library Learning Center. The organization is governed by a Board of Trustees and led by a Director and two Deputy Directors. In addition, CCL has two administrative Principal Librarians who collaborate. One is dedicated to data analysis while the other focuses on outreach. The Cole branch employs roughly 80 employees with seven devoted to the Children's section. Youth programming includes storytimes, partnership reading events, collaborations with youth entertainers, and summer reading.

City of Carlsbad. Carlsbad, CA is a coastal city in the north of San Diego County. According to 2020 Census data, 114,746 people live in Carlsbad (United States Census Bureau, n.d). Here are the city's demographics for people of all ages:

> 69.3% White
> 15.5% Hispanic or Latino
> 9.1% Asian
> 4.4% Unknown identification
> 1.1% Black
> 0.4% Indigenous
> 0.2% Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander
> 7% identified as two or more races

An estimated 23.2% of this population is under 18 (United States Census Bureau, n.d.).

Literature Review

How do information professionals conduct DEI examinations within their organizations? Several tendencies surfaced in the literature but a consensus on the most efficient practice has yet to be determined. How an audit is conducted and the commitment involved in performing this type of evaluation rests largely on the organization's strategic objectives.

Diversity Audits

Peer-Reviewed Audit Tendencies

Finding peer-reviewed articles discussing library DEI audits of youth collections at schools and public libraries within the past five years was challenging. The author discovered only one article that met these criteria. Wickman and Sweeney (2018) audited easy reader and juvenile biographies at a rural public library. The author could not locate a peer-reviewed article featuring a school library DEI audit. Henderson et al.'s study (2020) from an *The Reading Teacher* came close, examining classroom libraries. There were a few studies of youth materials outside

this narrow scope that were insightful regarding DEI audits. Backman et al. (2018) audited an urban public library but it analyzed teen fiction rather than children's materials. Cahill et al.'s (2021) audit explored youth materials at public libraries in rural, urban, and suburban regions but it only analyzed books featured during storytime programs for preschool children. Most of the DEI audit studies on youth collections were conducted on collections housed in university libraries for the use of undergraduate and graduate students pursing a degree in education (Buchanan & Sydney, 2019; Kester, 2022; Salem, 2022). Daly's (2017) study was an unusual departure where a panel of librarians and teachers analyzed 60 nominated books containing diversity. These books were not part of any specific physical collection. The professionals pared down the titles into a 22-book list for classroom promotion. Similarly, Moeller and Becnel (2018) analyzed the Young Adult Library Services 2015 graphic novel booklist to discover character representation, their primary role in the story, and whether the author was from a racially diverse background. They compared their data to statistics in the Cooperative Children's Book Center research on youth books in 2015 (Moeller & Becnel, 2018). The author included a few more peer-reviewed studies that had tangential relevance. Pedersen (2022), Schneider and Norman (2023), and Stone (2020) all involved in DEI analyses but did not examine youth literature.

Audit approaches generally fell into two prescribed analysis methods. One path used a predetermined set of criteria outlined on a questionnaire/survey that organizational personnel completed as they scanned materials (Backman et al., 2018; Buchanan & Sydney, 2019; Cahill et al., 2021; Daly, 2017; Henderson et al., 2020; Kester, 2022; Moeller & Becnel, 2018; Schneider & Norman, 2023; Stone, 2020; Wickham & Sweeney, 2018). The other uploaded collection data into a digital tool for analysis (Pedersen, 2022; Salem, 2022).

The scope of the evaluations also varied. Some auditors sampled a subcategory within a particular collection area or looked at materials recommended by a library association for a specific year (Henderson et al., 2020; Moeller & Becnel, 2018; Schneider & Norman, 2023). Two generated a random data set from a determined section (Cahill et al., 2021; Wickman & Sweeney, 2018). Sometimes, the recency of the material also played a factor in the dataset selection (Backman et al., 2018; Buchanan & Sydney, 2019). One looked at books published nearly a decade apart to discover if diverse content had increased (Stone, 2020). Other audits tackled a more extensive scope of materials to get a genuine sense of the representation (Pedersen, 2022; Kester, 2022; Salem, 2022).

Auditors usually wanted to compare their data or collection to something else. Some researchers utilized an outward-in approach where they began by looking at a pre-existing list from another entity and then compared it to the collection. Examples include a purchase wish list, data at the Cooperative Children's Book Center (Cooperative Children's Book Center Diversity Statistics, n.d.), or titles released by publishers (Backman et al., 2018; Schneider & Norman, 2023; Stone, 2020). Daly (2017) and Moeller and Becnel (2018) used a list of nominated books for comparison. Stone (2020) looked at newly published titles on the market and materials recently acquired by the library. Conversely, other researchers had an inside-out process where they determined the representation

level in the collection and then compared it to outside data, like local demographics or other statistics (Buchanan & Sydney, 2019; Cahill et al., 2021; Henderson et al., 2020; Kester, 2022; Salem, 2022).

Tendencies in Practitioner Articles, Panels, and Posts

While this topic is lacking in peer-reviewed journals, the author found plenty of articles about diversity audits from practitioners. Some of these practitioner publications revealed additional discoveries. Elrod and Kester's (2020) study used Diverse BookFinder like Salem (2022). Elrod and Kester completed an audit, acquired ninety-five new books to address the gaps, and then ran a second audit. Jensen's (2018) audit took many months and used personnel for the analysis. Ultimately, the author advocated that professionals take a random sample of one section at a time before tackling another area in the collection. Jensen also noted that "body acceptance" is an area that is underrepresented in literature (2018, p.3). None of the tools used in the author's case study used this identity marker, but Jensen's observation is worth considering as weight and body shape factor into identity. Homan's (2019) examination empowered youth to perform the audit. Students contemplated representation and what was missing in nonfiction areas of the collection, particularly regarding holidays, science, biographies, history, sports, and hobbies (Homan, 2019). Having a youth perspective in the audit process helps avoid the pitfall of adult bias. Wells et al. (2022) tasked undergraduates to perform their audit and the participating students found the work engaging. Kirkland (2021) acknowledged that most audits identify gaps in representation and then purchase items to improve that baseline. However, "adding these new resources to our collections only addresses half of the issue. We must also weed out the outdated and biased books" (Kirkland, 2021, p.3). Bogan (2022a) illustrated that point more fully when discussing her weeding practices in an educational setting. "We must remember that the children in our schools have no choice about being there. They are legally required to spend every school day in the school and therefore the library must be safe and representative for them" (Bogan, 2022a, para. 8). For author Jenny Dupuis, this was lacking for her as a youth at her school (Kirkland, 2021). The books about indigenous populations, with which she identified, were titled *Peoples of the Past* (Kirkland, 2021), and showed harmful representations and an absence of stories set in the present. This one-sided representation has been a problem at EUSD as well. An equity training revealed that a current student in the district mistakenly thought that Native Americans were extinct.

Challenges with Diversity Audits

The literature identified a repeated lack of representation of Indigenous and Middle Eastern groups (Buchanan & Sydney, 2019; Elrod & Kester, 2020; Kester, 2022; Salem, 2022). Most audits focused on *who* is represented, while some studies also noted *how* those groups are depicted (Backman et al., 2018; Elrod & Kester, 2020; Jensen, 2018; Salem, 2022; Wells et al., 2022; Wickman & Sweeney, 2018). Wickman and Sweeney's (2018) study noticed Black stories with harmful

representation in the collection. Questioning authenticity is another part of discovering *how* groups are represented. Backman et al. (2018) advocated that supporting self-identified authors from diverse communities ensures accurate representation.

More than half of audits and posts centered on race. Only a few peer-reviewed studies and additional posts covered diverse groups like LGBTQIA+ and people with disabilities (Buchanan & Sydney, 2019; Cahill et al., 2021; Homan, 2019; Jensen, 2018; Kester, 2022; Mortensen, 2019; Stone, 2020; Wells et al., 2022). Stone (2020) noted that when it comes to underrepresented communities, "many of these demographic facets are difficult to accurately capture if they are not self-identified" (p. 309). Several auditors advocated for stories that contained more intersection and reflection of young individuals (Buchanan & Sydney, 2019; Elrod & Kester, 2020; Henderson et al., 2020; Kester, 2022; Salem, 2022).

Challenges with Audit's Scope

Garofalo (2021) observed that "a major limiting factor for most libraries, library staff, and librarians for any project is time" (p. 212). Kester (2022) also noted how time-consuming their study became. Davis and Strackeljahn (2022) devoted only 3-5 minutes per item for analysis, but the audit still took six months to complete and only audited 25% of fiction. Nevertheless, auditors tended to gravitate toward this type of analysis over using an online tool because they argued it revealed more relevant data than a digital counterpart. Davis and Strackeljahn found that when staff performed the audit, it achieved organizational change within the larger context of DEI initiatives. If a digital tool was used in the Wickman and Sweeney's (2018) study it may have missed the offensive content that the researchers noticed. However, Elrod and Kester (2020) and Salem (2022) touted the convenience of using a fast digital tool for analysis. Both strategies have their strengths and weaknesses. Arguably, it comes down to an organization's priorities and strategic aims to determine which method makes the most sense. Digital tools may not achieve the same impact as staff-performed audits. However, an organization should consider time and cost before deciding on a preferred method.

Need for More Youth Collection DEI Audits

It is discouraging to find no peer-reviewed studies of school library collection DEI audits. Youth likely would benefit if school libraries filled representation gaps, but it is difficult to know where to begin without an analysis of their current holdings. Perhaps the *School Library Research* or *Library Quarterly* journals could put out a submission call on this topic to see if schools are conducting diversity audits of their materials for empirical research.

Methodology

As a single researcher analyzing both libraries, digital tools were selected for speed and efficiency. The audits targeted fiction picture books as these materials reach

the youngest school demographic but may also appeal to older youth and adults reading aloud to children. Furthermore, the visual aspect of picture books may provide that "self-affirmation" mentioned by Bishop (1990, p. ix), even for youth who have yet to master reading. Like Elrod and Kester (2020) and Salem (2022), the author chose Diverse BookFinder's Collection Analysis Tool (DBF's CAT) as one of the audit tools. TeachingBooks' Collection Analysis Toolkit (TB's CAT) and collectionHQ's Diversity Analysis Tool (cHQ's DAT) were also selected for their ease of use and different strengths. The author settled on an inside-out approach where they first conducted an analysis and then compared it to school and city demographics.

Audit Analysis Tools

Diverse BookFinder's Collection Analysis Tool

Researchers at Bates College created DBF (Diverse BookFinder, 2023e). The free tool compares collections to a database of diverse book titles going back to 2002. It allows organizations to upload the international standard book numbers (ISBNs) of picture books and see analysis results for titles matching their database. At the time of this study, DBF had specific limitations. Their database could not analyze certain book formats (e.g., board books, leveled-readers, and middle-grade). However, the organization plans to analyze all children's literature (i.e., picture books through Young Adult) in the near future. The author felt it necessary to pare down their dataset to fit within DBF's limitations for accurate results. ISBNs for books falling outside DBF's parameters were removed. Additionally, DBF's CAT restricts the analysis to race and ethnicity in picture books for early readers, categorizing titles with the following identity markers:

- Asian/Pacific Islander/Asian American
- Bi/Multiracial/Mixed Race
- Black/African/African American
- Brown-Skinned and/or Race Unclear
- First Native Nations/American Indian/Indigenous
- Latinx/Hispanic/Latin American
- Middle Eastern/North African/Arab
- Multi-Racial Cast of Characters (Diverse BookFinder, 2023d)

The investigation not only notes *who* is represented but also *how*. DBF storyline representations are:

- Any Child: books with no identity focus
- Beautiful Life: books that focus on identity
- Biography: books about the life of a real person
- Cross Group: books sharing connections between various groups of people
- Folklore: books sharing specific stories or customs of a group
- Incidental: books where the diverse representation is background characters
- Informational: books with facts

- Oppression & Resilience: books depicting marginalization
- Race/Culture Concepts: books exploring "aspects of human difference" (Diverse BookFinder, 2023c)

These areas may intersect and books can fall into multiple categories. For those leaning toward human auditors over digital tools, it might interest them to know that DBF researchers have twenty years of experience examining youth literature.

TeachingBooks's Collection Analysis Toolkit

TB's CAT is another free tool that analyzes diversity in youth literature. Founded by Nick Glass, a former bookseller, it houses a catalog of booklists and author information dating from 2001 (TeachingBooks, 2021-2023b). The TB database contains books that are reviewed and classified by a team of youth services librarians who have been in the profession several decades. Through the upload of ISBNs, TB's CAT can analyze fiction and nonfiction trade books, pre-K through 12th grade. TB's CAT reveals a wealth of information about a collection including graphs with the median publication year, genre breakdowns, the number of books serving a particular grade, and elements of cultural diversity. The tool identifies the following cultural experience categories:

Race/Ethnicity:
- African Global (i.e., African, African American)
- American Indian
- Asian Global (i.e., Asian, Asian American, South Asian)
- Latino/a/e/x Global (i.e., Latino US/Canada, Latino Latin America)
- Middle Eastern
- Multiracial/Mixed Race
- Pacific Islander/Oceania

More Diverse Groups:
- Disability
- Gender (i.e., Women/Girls, Transgender/Non-Conforming, Men/Boys)
- Immigrant/Refugee
- Jewish
- LGBTQ+
- Muslim (TeachingBooks, 2021-2023a)

An Excel spreadsheet with all the matching titles and diverse identities is shared so auditors know which books in their collection correspond to TB's database. Titles can overlap into more than one category.

collectionHQ's Diversity Analysis Tool

cHQ's DAT is part of a paid service under the parent book distributor Baker & Taylor to help libraries quickly generate data on their collections (collectionHQ, n.d.). It works in tandem with many integrated library systems, accessing the

bibliographic records in a collection for analysis. A common task cHQ performs is a report on collection circulation, identifying frequent checkouts vs. what remains on the shelf. cHQ statistics can influence future purchases, promotions, and weeding. In July 2021, cHQ released its DAT containing twelve DEI Filter Topics. These topics are assigned to books using information from Baker & Taylor, Kirkus Diversity Selection Lists, Library of Congress Headings, and BISAC (Book Industry Standards and Communications). Here is the complete list of the DAT topics, organized between race/ethnicity and additional areas of diversity:

Race/Ethnicity:
- Asian
- Black
- Hispanic & Latino
- Indigenous
- Middle Eastern & North African
- Multicultural

More Diverse Groups:
- LGBTQIA+ & Gender Studies
- Disabilities & Neurodiversity
- Mental & Emotional Health
- Religion
- Equity & Social Issues
- Substance Abuse & Addictions

cHQ's support team can provide a comprehensive Excel spreadsheet of collection titles, noting the diverse groups and how many times those titles have circulated in the past year. At the time of this study, cHQ's DAT only examined physical acquisitions and did not scrutinize digital content.

Tool Comparison and Strengths

Each audit tool has different strengths. DBF is the only tool amongst the three which shares how diverse groups are portrayed in stories. Both TB and cHQ are able to classify diverse identities beyond the scope of race and ethnicity (e.g. LGBTQIA+). Furthermore, TB and cHQ label all the intersectionality for a title (e.g., Religion, Asian). TB and cHQ share the diverse classification category alongside the bibliographic information for a title, allowing librarians to see which books represent various groups in their collection. cHQ is able to account for all the books in a library's section (e.g. picture books), minimizing the need to extrapolate anything further from the data. Additionally, cHQ's DEI Evaluate Online Platform displays representation graphs showing how the collection is evolving over time.

Preparing the Data

EUSD

EUSD uses Follett's Destiny as its integrated library system. The author made sure that the fiction picture book dataset only included items that met DBF's parameters. Thus, the author only loaded ISBNs of fiction picture books from 2002 to the present to DBF and TB's CAT and excluded any of the book formats that are not part of DBF's database. The author also kept the dataset free of duplicates and titles with no ISBN.

Cole

cHQ's online platform allows a researcher to download a spreadsheet of items for a particular part of the library collection. However, the author found that cHQ's online platform was not including all of the titles for some reason. Therefore, cHQ's customer support generated the spreadsheet for the audit to make sure all the bibliographic records of physical books in the fiction picture book collection were included in the dataset. This included every juvenile fiction picture book title at Cole and excluded any duplicate titles. For uploads to DBF and TB, the cHQ dataset was reduced to titles following DBF's parameters.

Data Comparison

School accountability reports, required by the California Department of Education, contain information about student demographics and were used for comparison with the elementary school audit (Encinitas Union School District, 2020-2021). Cole's audit was compared with results from local census data (United States Census Bureau, 2022).

Researcher's Bias

The author acknowledges that their perspective on this topic is biased. They identify as a White, non-religious, non-disabled, middle-class, heterosexual, cis-gender, 42-year-old female. There may be revelations in this audit that the author missed.

Findings

EUSD Baseline

Current State of Picture Book Collection

Following DBF's parameters, the school's fiction picture book collection narrowed to 650 titles for upload to DBF's and TB's CAT. Using DBF only 4.6% feature diversity, a total of 30 books. First/Native Nations and Middle Eastern/North African have little to no representation in the elementary school's fiction picture book collection. Nothing in the collection represents Mixed Race (See Figure 1).

Figure 1

Number of Fiction Books in the EUSD School's Collection Matching DBF by Race/Ethnicity

Note. Adapted from "Diverse BookFinder Collection Analysis Report" by Diverse BookFinder, 2021. Copyright 2021 by Diverse BookFinder. Adapted with permission.

Table 1 reveals the number of books per story category. Most could feature any diverse child. No "Beautiful Life" books, where identity is central to the story, are present for Biracial/Mixed Race, First/Native Nations, Middle Eastern/North African, or Multiracial Character (See Table 1). Presumably, Folklore, Biography, and Informational have low counts because the dataset only included fiction titles, and these subjects are classified as nonfiction. Interestingly, Middle Eastern/North African/Arab feature only in the Cross Group category, with a relationship portrayal across racial groups (See Table 1). It begs the question: which group is being paired with Middle Eastern/North African/Arab?

Table 1

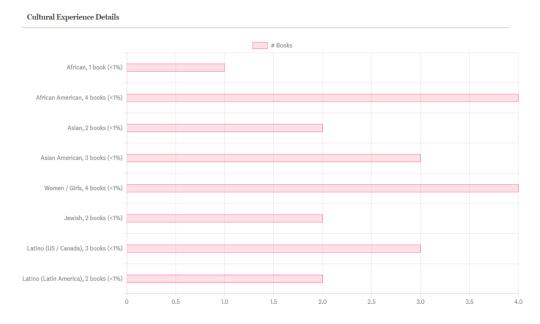*The EUSD School's Fiction Books by DBF's Categories Representing How Groups are Depicted in Stories*

	Asian / Pacific Islander / Asian American	Bi / Multiracial / Mixed Race	Black / African / African American	Brown-Skinned and / or Race Unspecified	Latinx / Hispanic / Latin American	First / Native Nations / American Indian / Indigenous	Middle Eastern / North African / Arab	Multi-Racial Cast of Characters	Totals
Any Child	0	0	5	7	1	0	0	2	15
Beautiful Life	3	0	1	1	1	0	0	0	6
Biography	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	2
Cross Group	1	0	1	1	1	0	1	1	6
Folklore	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Incidental	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1
Informational	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1
Oppression & Resilience	2	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	3
Race / Culture Concepts	1	0	2	0	0	0	0	1	4
Totals	8	0	11	10	4	0	1	5	39

Note. The total number of books is 39 because some titles overlap into more than one category. Only 30 books in the dataset matched DBF's collection database for diverse content. Adapted from "Diverse BookFinder Collection Analysis Report" by Diverse BookFinder, 2021. Copyright 2021 by Diverse BookFinder. Adapted with permission.

TB recognized 4.6% of titles or 21 books with diversity out of 447 titles matched. TB's CAT distinguishes the Latinx representation in US/Canada vs. the rest of Latin America. It also qualifies Asian American vs. Asian Global. There were only 5 books representing Latinx, with 3 labeled as US/Canada and 2 categorized as Latin America (See Figure 2). Asian also only had 5 books, with 3 categorized as Asian American and 2 for Asian Global (See Figure 2). *Ruby's Wish* by Shirin Yim Bridges was the only book in TB's report that crossed into more than one category, identifying as Women/Girls, Asian Global (Bridges, 2015). TB's CAT recognized only two books featuring Judaism. Cultural experiences not represented in the elementary school collection were American Indian, South Asian, Disability, Transgender/Non-Conforming, Men/Boys, Immigrant/Refugee, LGBTQ+, Middle Eastern, Multiracial/Mixed Race, Muslim, and Pacific Islander/Oceania (See Figure 2).

Figure 2

Number of Fiction Books by Cultural Experience in the EUSD School's Collection Identified by TB

Cultural Experience Details

Note. Only 21 books in the dataset matched TB's collection database for diverse content. One book crossed over into more than one diverse category. Adapted from "TeachingBooks Collection Analysis Report" by TeachingBooks, 2021. Copyright 2021 by TeachingBooks. Adapted with permission.
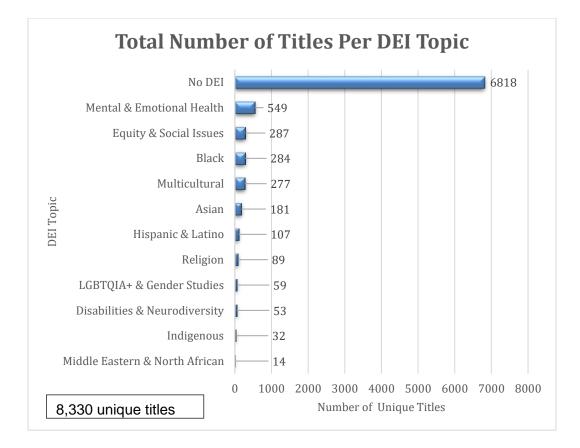
Cole Baseline

cHQ analyzed the entire fiction picture book collection at the Cole branch. At the time of the analysis, Cole had 8,330 fiction picture book titles and 1,512 had one or more DEI topic(s). Substance Abuse & Addictions did not surface in any of Cole's fiction picture book collection. cHQ assigned multiple DEI topics for 345 titles. An example of this intersectionality happened with the picture book *My Footprints* by Bao Phi (2019). It tells the story of Thuy, who wrestles with big emotions as her peers tease her about her gender, ethnicity, and family structure of two moms. cHQ categorized this book as "Asian, LGBTQIA+ & Gender Studies, and Equity & Social Issues." Therefore, this single title was counted in the totals for each of these three DEI topics.

Figure 3 displays the number of titles by category. There is little representation of Indigenous and Middle Eastern/North African groups. Hispanic & Latino, the largest racial demographic in Carlsbad after White, have low representation. Only .6% of Cole's collection cover stories about disabilities and neurodiversity.
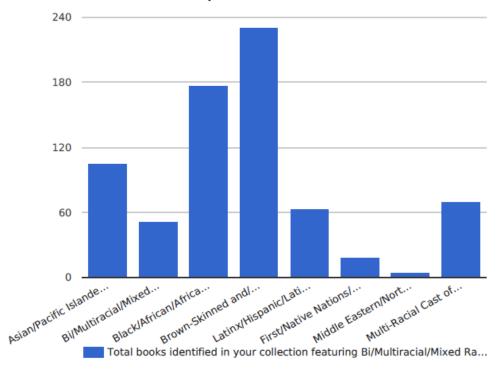
Figure 3

Number of Titles by cHQ Category

Total Number of Titles Per DEI Topic

DEI Topic	Number of Unique Titles
No DEI	6818
Mental & Emotional Health	549
Equity & Social Issues	287
Black	284
Multicultural	277
Asian	181
Hispanic & Latino	107
Religion	89
LGBTQIA+ & Gender Studies	59
Disabilities & Neurodiversity	53
Indigenous	32
Middle Eastern & North African	14

8,330 unique titles

To follow DBF's parameters, the Cole collection was trimmed to 7,164 items for upload to DBF's and TB's CAT. Only 587 titles, or 8.2%, were recognized as diverse in DBF (See Figure 4). Folklore, Biography, and Informational have low counts, likely because the dataset only included fiction (See Table 2). Middle Eastern/North African/Arab and First/Native Nations were underrepresented in nearly every DBF storyline category. The category that had the highest count was "Any Child" (See Table 2). No Oppression & Resilience books exist for Latinx/Hispanic/Latin American in either collection. The DBF analysis indicates how certain groups lack a variety of stories in youth literature, and Latinx/Hispanic/Latin American books tend to favor "Beautiful Life" stories (Diverse BookFinder, 2023b). Data in Table 2 seems to support this theory, although there are also a lot of stories for this group under "Any Child."

Figure 4

Number of Fiction Books in Cole's Collection Matching DBF by Race/Ethnicity

Who is Represented in Your Collection?

Note. Adapted from "Diverse BookFinder Collection Analysis Report" by Diverse BookFinder, 2022. Copyright 2022 by Diverse BookFinder. Adapted with permission.

Table 2

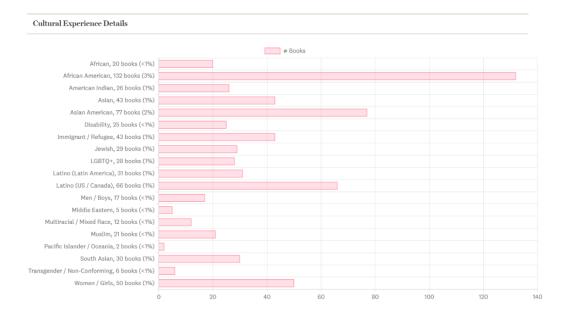*Cole's Fiction Books by DBF's Categories Representing How Groups are Depicted in Stories*

	Asian / Pacific Islander / Asian American	Bi / Multiracial / Mixed Race	Black / African / African American	Brown-Skinned and / or Race Unspecified	Latinx / Hispanic / Latin American	First / Native Nations / American Indian / Indigenous	Middle Eastern / North African / Arab	Multi-Racial Cast of Characters	Totals
Any Child	49	39	111	189	25	5	0	15	433
Beautiful Life	38	8	35	10	26	12	3	6	138
Biography	3	1	3	0	1	1	0	0	9
Cross Group	24	3	43	45	10	0	4	6	135
Folklore	6	1	5	9	5	0	0	0	26
Incidental	5	1	11	16	1	0	0	45	79
Informational	4	1	4	2	1	1	0	6	19
Oppression & Resilience	4	0	9	1	0	3	0	1	18
Race / Culture Concepts	5	7	11	7	7	2	0	11	50
Totals	138	61	232	279	76	24	7	90	907

Note. The total number of books is 907 because some titles overlap into more than one category. Only 587 books in the dataset matched DBF's collection database for diverse content. Adapted from "Diverse BookFinder Collection Analysis Report" by Diverse BookFinder, 2021. Copyright 2021 by Diverse BookFinder. Adapted with permission.

Of the 7,164 items uploaded from Cole's fiction picture book collection, TB's database matched 5,034 titles. Only 542 titles, or 10.7%, were recognized as diverse in TB. All the diverse identities listed had about 1% representation, except African American which was 3% and Asian American which was 2% (See Figure 5). Disability had less than 1% representation. Every TB diverse category was represented to some degree in the Cole fiction picture book collection.

Figure 5

Number of Fiction Books by Cultural Experience in Cole's Collection Identified by TB

Cultural Experience Details

Note. Cole's fiction picture book collection had representation in every diverse category within TB's CAT. A total of 79 books out of the 542 diverse titles overlapped into more than one category. Adapted from "TeachingBooks Collection Analysis Report" by TeachingBooks, 2022. Copyright 2022 by TeachingBooks. Adapted with permission.

Discussion

These case studies are in San Diego County, the same region as Salem's (2022) study. Salem's audit examined a youth collection used by prospective educators at San Diego State University (SDSU). Results from the EUSD school and Cole have less diversity in their respective collections than Salem found at SDSU, where 10% of the titles matched DBF's CAT. The Carlsbad elementary school only had a 4% match and for Cole it was approximately 8%. It is plausible that the percentage of representation in the Carlsbad elementary school is lower than 4% if the entire fiction picture book collection is considered, because the collection has books prior to 2001 and it is doubtful that a significant portion are diverse.

Elrod and Kester (2020) and Salem (2022) found that their academic collections containing youth books lacked stories of First Nations and Indigenous groups as well as Middle Eastern/North African groups. The same is true for the case studies done in Carlsbad. These demographics do not have a high population presence in the Carlsbad community, but representation of these communities in school and public libraries would likely increase cultural understanding for all youth. Both libraries could also bolster their collections with diverse books to match local demographic percentages. A total of 28.1% of the elementary school students, and 37.7 % of the Carlsbad community, identified as non-White, which illustrates a large disparity in the collections. Both libraries could add stories about Hispanic & Latino and Asian populations as these are the highest racial demographics in Carlsbad after White. The number of books about Latino and Asian populations in both collections only amount to 2% or less. Gaining stories with mixed-race

narratives would fill a dearth at the EUSD school. Four percent of the 2021 school community identified as Biracial/Mixed Race, and this demographic makes up 7% of people of all ages in the Carlsbad region. Improving representation for people with disabilities and neurodiversity is another area to explore. In 2021, 14% of the EUSD school's students had a disability, but TB reported that only about 1% of books have this content at both institutions, and cHQ revealed that it only represents .6% of the Cole collection. These actions could strengthen *who* is represented in each library collection.

The findings also reveal areas for improvement in *how* diverse groups are depicted. DBF categorized most of the diverse books found as "any child" at both libraries (Diverse BookFinder, 2023c). It is a disservice to underrepresent the culture and identity of diverse communities. Oppression and resilience stories had low numbers at both libraries, including for the two highest racial demographics after White: Hispanic & Latino and Asian. DBF's database has the same disparity with only 6% of titles representing oppression and resilience for Latinx and Asians (Diverse BookFinder, 2023a; Diverse BookFinder, 2023b). DBF contends that the "continuing absence of books depicting Asian characters experiencing injustice or struggle reinforces the idea that Asian people do not experience oppression" (Diverse BookFinder, 2023a). The publishing industry has not published enough books to keep up with national demographic shifts, so finding stories along these lines in fiction picture books might prove challenging (Backman et al., 2018). It is also possible that oppression and resilience stories surface more in nonfiction picture books. When looking at the database for DBF with the filters "Oppression & Resilience" and "Latinx/Hispanic/Latin American," there were 32 results. Of those 32 results, 21 are classified as nonfiction (65%), which supports this theory. If the dataset for these case studies included nonfiction titles, perhaps these numbers would have been higher.

Several possible strategies might help libraries determine which books can fill these gaps. Professionals can search DBF's book collection for titles. Even though DBF's CAT only shares racial identity in their audit reports, their book collection search tool includes filters for immigration, gender, and religion. Some of the filtering is very specific, like "transgender" and "intersex" for gender, and "Jain" and "Sikh" for religion. There is even a filter for character prominence. Professionals can address the gaps in *how* a specific group is represented by seeking out titles in the DBF database and filtering their search by DBF's storyline categories. Consulting nontraditional resources is another option. Bogan (2022b) notes that libraries consult traditional reviewers like Horn Book and Kirkus for picture book acquisitions and some collection development policies require a two-star minimum. However, Bogan (2022b) explains that diverse stories may not always garner reviewer attention. Information professionals could consult their communities directly, asking for input to determine effective stories for purchase. Libraries could also examine other sources for local data about diverse groups. For example, the North County LGBTQ Resource Center has reports about their work, data, and evaluation (North County LGBTQ Resource Center, 2023). These reports could illuminate the local demographics and connect the library directly to that community. The Jewish Collaborative of San Diego is another organization with

insight into local community data. Collaborating with diverse non-profits could be beneficial in gaining acquisitions and promoting materials to the community, offering further insight into what stories are not being told and where representation should improve. Schneider and Norman (2023) mentioned that, once they identified gaps in native representation, they decided to buy materials from indigenous-owned businesses whenever feasible. Stone (2020) points out that publishers will see the demand and publish more if libraries purchase diverse materials.

Expanding data collection and offering increased transparency at the organization-level could also translate to more diverse collections. If governing bodies allowed it, schools could gather and report more detailed information about the demographics they serve. For example school accountability reports already provide binary gender counts at a school site (Encinitas Union School District, 2021-2022b). They could also share a tally of nonbinary students if that information was collected on pupil cards. That would make gender-diverse youth more apparent, addressing the demographic data challenge Stone (2020) mentions.

If both organizations want to see an outcome of behavioral change in their community where diverse groups receive more acknowledgement, then recognition and information sharing of a variety of diverse stories needs to be supported. Efforts to promote new acquisitions that fill specific gaps identified from an audit could help galvanize this change. Both libraries could increase the findability and feature these stories more prominently in their libraries. It is important that the promotion emphasizes the merits of the story or topic and not the diversity within (Bogan, 2022b). In addition, each institution may need to weed out titles no longer relevant to their community. Finally, conducting evaluation through a survey or focus group of youth and other stakeholders, after promoting new diverse books acquired for the collection, could be helpful in determining whether the improvements in representation had impact.

Limitations

The dataset was limited to fiction picture books. It is possible that more identities would have matched or have been counted if nonfiction picture books were included. Additionally, *how* certain groups are depicted in the stories might have had higher counts in various categories with DBF if nonfiction was audited.

It is important to note the professionals classifying the diverse identities to these youth titles. DBF uses a team of researchers. TB entrusts youth librarians. cHQ uses Baker & Taylor, Kirkus Diversity Selection Lists, Library of Congress Headings, and BISAC (Book Industry Standards and Communications). All three tools have a means of contact should an auditor want to discuss further the information being reported as well as the diverse identities represented.

The author noticed that none of the tools offered a socioeconomic or homeless topic, which is a data point in the elementary school's demographics. None included "body acceptance," a gap mentioned by Jensen (2018). cHQ could offer a DAT topic for "immigration" which is explored by Salem (2022) and offered by TB. TB could consider adding "Substance & Abuse" to its list of topics like cHQ. A problematic label in the cHQ DAT topics is "multicultural," which came

up as the only DEI flag for 134 titles. This label is not specific and does not lead to actionable data.

Conclusion

Wickman and Sweeney (2018) advocate that information organizations move "away from individualistic, one-off solutions toward longer-term, structural interventions that touch every aspect of collection representation" (p. 104). They argue that collection development policies should be "intentional, ongoing, and actively engaged with shifting the very institutional structures that libraries champion for their resiliency" (Wickman & Sweeny, 2018, p. 102). In this instance it might mean creating a new inclusive collection policy. Collection audits examining representation have value when planned well, "[casting a] light on the homogeneity embedded within library collections" (Mortensen, 2019, p. 28). An audit helps collection developers be more efficient with time and funds by establishing a DEI reference point before implementing any change. A library can increase transparency with its stakeholders by sharing the results of a DEI audit and the subsequent changes it makes to its collection.

The author hoped to uncover the degree that these two libraries in Carlsbad, California represent their diverse population in youth fiction picture book collections. After conducting audits at both libraries, it was clear the collections need work to make them diverse, equitable, and inclusive. DBF showed that less than 10% of each collection had diverse content, which is significantly lower than the total non-White population percentage within the Carlsbad community. The non-White Carlsbad community totals 37.7%, but only 18.2% of Cole's collection flagged cHQ DEI content. There is a lack of representation, particularly with First/Native Nations and Middle Eastern/North African populations in both collections. No Bi/Multiracial/Mixed Race books were present at the elementary school. Additional diverse identity markers beyond race appear to have low representation as well. For example, 14% of the school's students identified as having a disability in 2021, but TB reported that there were no books at the elementary school with this representation and less than 1% of books have this content at Cole. cHQ revealed that it only represents .6% of the Cole collection. When DBF looked at how racial groups were represented in each collection, there was an overwhelming number of stories not connected to the race or culture of the characters featured. If this type of representation continues to monopolize these fiction picture book collections, then diverse youth may only partially see their experiences mirrored in literature, and opportunities for cultural understanding will be missed. There is a lack of stories in the collections about diverse groups on the topic of oppression and resilience. This absence could give the impression that certain groups do not experience these challenges. The libraries could look at acquiring these stories, particularly for Latinx as the highest racial demographic after White. These audits reveal that both libraries have a small number of picture books representing diverse populations in Carlsbad, and the diverse stories told need more variation.

Organizations within the same community could share audit results. Public libraries, with their funding, numerous staff, and access to digital tools like cHQ, could help school libraries locate books with diverse representation. Those titles could even be loaned to the schools for review before they commit their own resources. In return, school libraries could help public libraries tap youth input and get them involved in reshaping youth collections.

The digital tools mentioned in this study can help a library track its improvements over time. The cHQ online platform provides a snapshot of how the collection is fairing with DEI by producing line graphs and collection breakdowns. If annual reports are kept from DBF and TB, they can also be compared to track change over time. Researchers can repeat the audit process in these case studies at other institutions to evaluate their holdings. It is important to note that identifying gaps and securing more representative books is insufficient (Bogan, 2022b). Promoting these stories to communities is just as essential to achieving more DEI (Cahill et al., 2021). Locating the books with diverse content in the audit reports from TB or cHQ can help libraries find these titles for display or promotion. It takes significant planning, considering, and identifying of desired outcomes, but improving DEI representation in youth collections via diversity audits is worthwhile.

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