Partners in Mission: A Critical Examination of the Library as a Locus for Social Justice

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Partners in Mission: A Critical Examination of the Library as a Locus for Social Justice

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Our research explores with a critical lens the impact academic libraries have, on their own and in collaboration with campus partners, in promoting social justice at their institutions.

Inquiry #1:  
*Who are we?*

Inquiry #2:  
*What do we do?*
In May 2017, a demographic survey was sent to AJCU Library Directors with a request to distribute to all their library staff. The intent of this survey was to explore the question:

What is the current race/ethnic, gender, religious, socio-economic, disability status and sexual orientation of AJCU librarians and how does this align with the make-up of our students?
Inquiry #1: **Who are we?**

**Response Rate of Survey:**

- 175 people responded* (19%)
  - 112 professional librarians
  - 39 paraprofessionals
  - 24 other

- 90% of responders were full-time

* We estimate 935 total library employees over AJCU schools.
NOTE:
AJCU students sex breakdown matches national averages (AJCU, 2014) & (NCES, 2014).
Nationwide librarian female/male ratio is 81%/19% (ALA, 2012).

Inquiry #1: *Who are we?*
Inquiry #1: Who are we?

**AJCU Library Staff**
**Sexual Orientation Self Identification**

- LGBT, 15%
- Heterosexual, 80%
- Questioning or Not Report, 5%

Of those born 1980-1998, aka Millennials, 7.3% identify as LGBT (Gates, 2017)
### Inquiry #1: Who are we?

#### Religion

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>AJCU LIBRARY STAFF</th>
<th>MILLENNIALS</th>
<th>AJCU STUDENTS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Catholic: 24%</td>
<td>Catholic: 16%</td>
<td>Catholic: 54%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Protestant: 26%</td>
<td>Protestant: 36%</td>
<td>Other Christian: 15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unaffiliated: 43%</td>
<td>Unaffiliated (nones): 36%</td>
<td>Jewish: 1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Jewish: 2%</td>
<td>Muslim: 1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>◦ Atheist/Agnostic 19%</td>
<td>Other: 10%</td>
<td>Undeclared: 21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>◦ Claim no religious preference 24%</td>
<td></td>
<td>Other: 7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other: 7%</td>
<td></td>
<td>(AJCU, 2014) Note: FY 12-13 data</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Pew, 2014)
71% of AJCU students are White (AJCU, 2014)

Race/Ethnicity

National % and AJCU Library Staff

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Race/Ethnicity</th>
<th>AJCU Library Staff %</th>
<th>National Students %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Black or African American</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic of any race</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>78%</td>
<td>57%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Inquiry #1: Who are we?
Inquiry #1: *Who are we?*

- 77% of US full time faculty are White (NCES, 2017).
- 86% of academic libraries are White (ALA, 2012)

### Race/Ethnicity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>AJCU Librarians %</th>
<th>Hispanic of any race</th>
<th>White</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Black or African American</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>81%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AJCU Paraprofessionals %</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>75%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Survey sent to all 28 AJCU Library directors
• 18 completed surveys (64%)

21 questions focusing on the intersection of social justice with
• Collections
• Space
• Archives & Special Collections
• Staff efforts to support social justice
• Information Literacy
• Human Resources
• Programs
Library has been successful in hiring and retaining staff from underrepresented minority groups

- 30% who are successful
- 88% who think it is extremely or very important
Inquiry #2: What do we do?

Library has developed action plans for recruiting underrepresented minorities into library and archives work.

- 75% of respondents think it is extremely or very important.
- 25% have action plans.
Inquiry #2: What do we do?

My archives collect and preserve materials related to underrepresented and marginalized groups.

- % who think it is important or very important: 76%
- % who say they collect: 56%
Inquiry #2: *What do we do?*

Incorporating social justice frameworks into information literacy education

- % who think it is extremely or very important: 94%
- % who are incorporating social justice frameworks: 78%
Inquiry #2: *What do we do?*

Librarians collaborate with faculty on social justice research projects/community based action research

- % who think it is extremely important or very important: 76%
- % whose librarians are collaborating: 88%
Inquiry #2: What do we do?

Having a personal librarian or similar program assigned to international students or devoted to underrepresented or marginalized groups

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>% who have a personal librarian program for underrepresented groups</th>
<th>% who believe it is extremely or important for underrepresented groups</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>International</td>
<td>International</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% who have a personal librarian program for international students</td>
<td>% who believe it is extremely or important for international students</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
What We Learned

**STAFF DIVERSITY**

- 71% of AJCU librarians are female. Librarianship is a female dominated profession and AJCU female/male ratio is less than average. Current students (nationally and AJCU) are about 57% female.

- AJCU library staff is more diverse in sexual orientation than the national averages and college age students.

- AJCU library staff race/ethnicity appears to be similar to AJCU students, on average. There is a significant difference between AJCU demographics and national student demographics. Future student demographics are projected to be more racially diverse.

- More young people are identifying as religiously unaffiliated. Similar patterns are seen with library staff.
What We Learned

RECRUITMENT

☐ Library directors acknowledge the need to recruit and retain a diverse staff and the creation of action plans. What support might be needed for them to create and implement action plans?

LIBRARY PRACTICES

☐ There is a significant gap in importance versus practice in collecting unique/archival material from underrepresented communities.

☐ AJCU librarians are actively incorporating social justice frameworks into research instruction.
What Actions Can We Take

Staff Diversity

- Look to hire more Hispanic and African American library staff. Consider encouraging staff to get an MLS.
- Library directors collaborate to create and adopt a diversity action plan.
- AJCU collects diversity data on a regular basis.
What Actions Can We Take

Collections

☐ In order to increase collections from underrepresented groups, these groups in the community and relevant community organizations must be identified.

☐ Develop workshops for archiving and preserving collections.

Instruction

☐ Promote courses that incorporate social justice frameworks into research instruction.
References


References


QUESTIONS?