# Special guest editorial: inclusive pedagogies and services

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We live in an era in which the idea of tolerance has been recognized as insufficient. To fully accomplish our purpose as information professionals, we must welcome those who are different from ourselves and take specific actions to include them in our institutions (Gibson *et al.*, 2017). Inclusion is both a phenomenon and a philosophy which touches upon many aspects of life and is particularly important to work on diversity, while going beyond considering race, ethnicity and national origin, but still taking into account these dimensions in the design of services and collections (American Library Association, 2017). Within information studies, inclusion has often taken center stage in conversations around the work of information professionals, especially those engaged in reference and instructional services (RIS). This special issue of *Research Services Review (RSR)* places the spotlight directly on an important and trending topic currently impacting RIS that of inclusive pedagogies and services in libraries.

Inclusive pedagogy has been defined as "... a pedagogical approach that responds to learner diversity in ways that avoid the marginalisation [*sic*] of some learners in the community of the classroom" (Spratt and Florian, 2015, p. 90). Marginalization can take many forms and includes those rooted in a variety of dimensions including social, emotional, cultural, as well as intellectual and physical disability (Florian *et al.*, 2010). Therefore, it is imperative to search for ways in which professionals can find new approaches to teaching and learning which focus on improving the quality of educational services for diverse groups of learners (Spratt and Florian, 2015). That need to improve the learning experience of various groups goes beyond the formal classroom, where inclusive pedagogy originated, and extends to spaces for lifelong learning and support of learning, such as libraries.

The topic of inclusivity in Library and Information Science (LIS) is not new, but one which is deeply entrenched in the principles of the profession, including the Library Bill of Rights itself (American Library Association, 2017). As guest editors of this special edition, we understand that inclusion in library settings is holistic and reaches multiple dimensions of work in libraries, especially the work of those who specialize in providing services to the public. In our recognition of the foundational nature of inclusion in libraries, we echo the ALA's stance that inclusion is the creation of an environment that "... all individuals are treated fairly and respectfully; are valued for their distinctive skills, experiences, and perspectives; have equal access to resources and opportunities ..." (American Library Association, 2017).

It is under these principles that we present this special issue of *RSR*. The articles included here discuss various dimensions and aspects of inclusivity in libraries, from the implementation and value of Universal Design for Learning (UDL) principles within library instruction, to research designed to understand library employees' knowledge of

inclusive issues and practices. The articles place special emphasis on reference, instruction, and research support as they manifest in various scenarios including academic libraries, special collections and archives.

## Issue highlights

Topics of inclusive pedagogy have a strong connection to the field of education and are usually centered on instruction issues. These connections have strongly influenced LIS practice especially through libraries' information literacy and instruction roles, and the instruction component of reference services. In this volume, it should come as no surprise that there is a strong representation of articles focusing on the integration of critical and inclusive pedagogical practices into library instruction and instructional aspects of reference services.

Case in point, Fullmer and Strand explore how the shifts to online information instruction necessitated by the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic triggered new ways of formatting and creating instruction in a way in which it can foster inclusive pedagogy. In *Fostering UDL-Informed Library Instruction Practices Developed from the COVID-19 Pandemic*, the researchers specifically explore UDL practices in the context of information literacy. Similarly, Kirsch takes a UDL approach in their exploration of the promotion of inclusive pedagogy in a university campus and the leadership role a librarian was able to take within this endeavor in the article *Implementing Universal Design for Learning in the Library and Across Campus to Promote More Inclusive Pedagogy*.

For their part, Stephanie Founds brings clarity to the role and impact of trauma-informed practices within librarianship through a structured literature review, which highlights where the field stands on the use of trauma-informed practices and how these practices may evolve in the future. Founds' article, *Trauma-informed librarianship: an exploratory literature review of trauma-informed approaches in school, academic and public libraries*, goes beyond the pandemic to present a broad approach to issues faced in academic institutions today, which can benefit those seeking to embark in the provision of trauma-informed library services. The topic of trauma-informed practice is also present in *Listening to Diverse Voices: Inclusive Pedagogy and Culturally Responsive Teaching for Library Interactions*, where Gupta, Liu, Lin, Zhong and Suzuki also employ cultural responsiveness and inclusive teaching approaches to library curricula. Their study suggests the use of trauma-informed and learner-centered approaches to instruction in the library setting as a means for supporting student learning and academic success.

UDL and trauma-informed approaches to teaching are just two of the many frameworks represented in the diverse group of articles that make up this special issue of *RSR*. Authors also branch out in other directions, utilizing other nonstandard frameworks to showcase the flexibility of library instructional services. For instance, Brown and Weaver interrogate the utility of one-shot information literacy instruction interventions and students' ability to evaluate the information they encounter. In the article *Drama Queens: applying dramaturgy as an inclusive pedagogy within the one shot*, Brown and Weaver focus on innovative teaching practices, which can help facilitate this process through the integration of a dramaturgical approach to instruction. Their approach included going beyond the traditional, written, text-based assignment to one which allowed student interaction and helped create a process that highlighted the concepts of information value and its contextual nature; principles presented in the *Libraries Framework for Information Literacy for Higher Education* (a.k.a. ACRL Framework).

Moreno's *Centering Justice/Decentering Whiteness: The Case for Abolition in Information Literacy Pedagogical Praxis* also interrogates current approaches to information literacy by taking an abolitionist pedagogical approach to the question of how to combat racial inequities ingrained in our educational systems which marginalize people of color while

centering the white experience. This article's main goal is to explore the topic of inclusivity from a racial perspective, and remind us that while frameworks are important, they may not serve all equally—creativity may be needed to fully support the learning needs of the many and not the few.

The topic of classroom instruction and research consultations is further explored by Goodman and Godbey in their article *An Explicit Approach to Liminality as an Inclusive Approach to Librarian Support for Graduate Student Researchers*. Here, the authors use a framework based on critical pedagogy to further explore the concept of liminality, or the state of *inbetweenness*, represented by graduate students from traditionally marginalized communities in their process of becoming researchers, and how librarians can help support them in this process.

For their part, Maksin and Bucher analyze the archives perspective in *Revealing the Archive, Reckoning with the Past: Inclusive Approaches to Institutional History.* In this article, the authors employed inclusive pedagogy strategies incorporated into a credit-bearing course with the goal of examining potentially harmful materials which are available in the archive.

Articles in this special edition, also present topics which move beyond library instruction, to present a more holistic approach to reference and other library programming and services. In *Dismantling Structural and Individual Cisgenderism in Illinois Libraries*, Ness takes an empirical research approach to the study of library services to the transgender and nonbinary population. The study explores library employees' attitudes and biases which can become obstacles in providing truly inclusive services in libraries. In another exploration of potential obstacles to providing inclusive services, Ferrera shares results of a study designed to investigate library staff's understanding of disability and attitudinal barriers and the impact on library programming and service planning. Ferrera's work suggests that despite recognition that barriers exist, library staff may struggle to identify those barriers and may not address potential barriers in programming and service planning. And in *Small Axe: Chipping away at Special Collections Barriers to Inclusivity,* Sykes-Kunk, Camacho and Enriquez focus on special collection barriers to inclusivity. Employing Black and Chicana feminist frameworks, the authors explore the ways in which small actions can bring significant changes which can foster a sense of belonging and ownership in the realm of special collections for those from marginalized racial and ethnic identities.

*Decentering Whiteness in Libraries: Relational Work for an Inclusive Culture* by Denke and Cunningham presents the case of a library reading group aimed at understanding and critiquing the white supremacy culture in a predominantly white, liberal arts college. The authors employed a framework based on Relational-Cultural Theory to the discussions of race for a library reading group as they progressed through books specifically chosen for their conversations around this topic.

The articles in this special issue not only showcase the sheer enormity of issues related to inclusivity in library and information studies, but also the eclectic and creative approaches that library professionals are applying to not only understand these issues but to also overcome them. Whether interested in direct actions that will impact approaches to teaching and instruction of students, faculty, and staff; collaborative approaches to improving library staff knowledge and ability; or personal insights into what it means to engage in inclusive library work, this issue offers something for everyone. Regardless of level of engagement with inclusive and critical pedagogical practices, we can all benefit from the knowledge shared by the authors in this issue and the strong foundation that their work collectively provides.

References

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