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Collections Decoded: Reflections and Strategies for Anti-racist Collection Development

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Collections Decoded

**Reflections and Strategies for Anti-racist
Collection Development**

Your Facilitators:



**Kristyn
Caragher**



**Tracy
Drake**



**Aisha
Conner-Gaten**

Community Agreement

- 1. Listen actively -- respect others when they are talking and avoid side convos**
- 1. Speak from your own experience instead of generalizing ("I" instead of "they")**
- 1. Do not be afraid to respectfully challenge one another by asking questions, but refrain from personal attacks -- focus on ideas.**
- 1. Participate to the fullest of your ability -- community growth depends on the inclusion of every individual voice and be considerate of our shared time**
- 1. Instead of invalidating somebody else's story with your own spin on their experience, share your own story and experience.**
- 1. Be conscious of body language and nonverbal responses -- they can be as disrespectful as words.**

In Library School, I Learned....

Librarians as “information bridge”

Library as “communal space” that is “neutral”

Policies as “rules for safety and engagement”

Collection as curriculum

What is the problem?

- **Individual Level:**
 - **Centering whiteness and “American” culture**
 - **Personal bias & the power to act on it**
 - **Personal interest**
- **Institutional level**
 - **Intentionality in collections (statements, committees, etc.)**
 - **Boards: School, Management council, etc. etc. etc.**
 - **Correcting the catalog**
 - **Presenting materials**
- **Systemic level**
 - **“Unbearable whiteness” of librarianship**
 - **Vendors, publishers, and acquisition**

What is anti-racist...

Anti-racist librarianship is the practice of white LIS students and professionals actively working to dismantle white supremacy in libraries and other information centers while also being accountable to colleagues of color and the public we serve.

Anti-racist collection development is the process of identifying and disrupting whiteness and racial inequality in our collections, collection development policies and professional practices.

Activity

1) What perspectives are lacking in academic, public, and archival collections?

Activity

2) What are strategies for developing anti-racist collection development?

Wrapping Up & Questions?

Strategies:

- Think about purpose and depth: resources for study, basic/practical/how to, and research levels
- For fiction, use of cultural or subject categories to highlight diverse perspectives e.g. detectives of color, rural romance, etc.
- Outreach: who is active in your area and how to connect with them. what social justice groups are in your area? What churches or religious organizations are active?
 - Where are local book fairs and authors?
 - Independent bookstores:
<http://www.womenandchildrenfirst.com/>
 - Independent publishers and reviewers:
<http://www.chicagoreviewpress.com/>

Wrapping Up & Questions?

More Strategies:

- Challenging vendor policies and replies to requests
 - Reference interview with your vendor about your content, what you want to see as a selector
 - Why are certain things missing or difficult to get through the vendor
 - Challenge subject categorization and broadening of items (not everything belongs under african-american!)
- Take risks! Collect unique materials and check stats
- Develop a personal subject bibliography. What is currently being said? Are there essential voices that you need to know about?
- Use the space: what are your displays and exhibitions saying to your users?

Thank you to strangers

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Notes from the reflect-pair-share at ALA Annual 2017:

- Buy more: representation of differing viewpoints
- Not traditional publishers in community and buy
- Mandates by county and funds must be with minority business enterprise (hard to find in one place)
 - Independent publishers will provide content, but how can we get inclusion in processing for larger libraries?
 - Advocacy and mention for book production
- Special collections: working advisory groups where other institutions contribute to collection development
 - Crowdsourcing ideas and anxieties
 - Self-examination and making space for yourself to grow (challenge personal bias)
 - Fostering conversations with community and dialogue
- Weeding policies >> update to reflect 21st century
 - Tracking book in the collection > books used in the library isn't tracked
 - Scan book as check out to have real metrics
- Historically, we had more inclusive images (70s) and reflection of political climate
 - Knowledge of others of diverse content

Notes Continued:

- Lists from Library Journal, etc.
 - Checking out possible titles and reading reviews
- Authors and self-representation. What are the authors really relaying?
 - Prioritizing authorship from diverse perspectives
- Pathways for patrons to be involved in collection development
 - Policies on display as well (transparency) to encourage participation and alleviate patron concerns (sometimes)
- Not everything is about books!
 - Expanding our resources to include cultural artifacts and heritage from the community
 - Look more broadly to unpublished materials
- Checklist stemming from self evaluation
 - What is being included
 - Many perspectives
- Exhibit spaces > bring out the oldies but goodies
 - Rotating exhibit and perspectives
 - Metadata database for different interests (tagging)
- Banned Books
 - Focusing on the not so popular and providing background for “banned” status