

Transforming LIS Education by Understanding the Complex Decisions of Public Library Leaders

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ABSTRACT

Decisions made by librarians in formal leadership roles in public libraries can have a lasting impact on their organizations and communities. For instance, several public libraries across the nation have asked drag queens to host their story time programs. This practice has created controversy and placed library leaders into situations where they have to take the needs of many different stakeholders into account. Understanding how library leaders make decisions, with emphasis on their sensemaking strategies, will shed light on this important aspect of public library leaders' roles and transform LIS management education.

This poster will present the early stages of a research project exploring these questions:

- 1) When faced with a complex problem, how do public library leaders make decisions?;
- 2) What information and sensemaking strategies do public library leaders employ when making complex decisions?;
- 3) What kinds of problems do public library leaders consider to be complex dilemmas?;
- 4) What values do public library leaders espouse when making complex decisions? And, how do these values inform their decision-making?

Three approaches to data collection will be used: (1) interviews with public library leaders; (2) direct observation of practice; and (3) reviews of organizational policies and professional standards.

A goal of this project is to foster the inclusion of complex decision-making processes in LIS curricula through the development and dissemination of a decision-making framework. This project will LIS-specific, empirical findings that will help emerging leaders develop their own mental models for decision-making and improve LIS management and leadership education.

ALISE RESEARCH TAXONOMY TOPICS

information ethics; public libraries

AUTHOR KEYWORDS

decision-making; leadership; professional core values; professional ethics