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Amplifying Antiracism Resources through Intra-University Collaboration

Cover Page Footnote

Acknowledgment As a University Libraries African American Librarian, I stand on the shoulders of Giants: Professor Mary D. Walters, Head, Acquisition Department, First African American Librarian to head a University Libraries department, Professor Mary P. Key, University Libraries, First African American Librarian hired in 1953, Professor Arline M. Rollins, Head, West Campus Undergraduate Library, First African American to head a Department Library and Professor Eleanor Murphy Daniel, First Black Studies Librarian. As a University African American and African Studies Librarian, I owe a gratitude of HOPE to the Black Studies Librarians and staff who kept Professor Mary D. Walters vision of an Africana Studies collection alive Ms. Akua Bandele, Professor Lisa Pillow, Professor Linda A. Krikos, Professor Miriam Conteh-Morgan, and Ms. Cheryl Mason-Middleton. – Leta Hendricks

Peer Reviewed Article

Amplifying Antiracism Resources through Intra-University Collaboration

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Abstract

In the summer of 2020, The Ohio State University Libraries was asked by The Ohio State University Office of Diversity and Inclusion (ODI) to collaborate with them to provide expanded access to antiracism book content in support of continuing education, reading groups, and professional development across the university. The Libraries' African American and African Studies Librarian worked with ODI's Director for Strategic Diversity Planning, Training, and Assessment to identify antiracism book titles of interest to recommend to the Collections Strategist for purchase or expanded access. The African American and African Studies Librarian created research guides to supplement the reading lists, expanded them to support campus-wide antiracism educational opportunities, and iterated the collection practices. This paper details not only the process of collaboration with another unit within the university, but also outlines challenges and opportunities faced with budget management, publishing and vendor practices with antiracism resources, and COVID-19 implications. It also addresses critical approaches to antiracism within library collaborations to university campus communities, including outreach, teaching, and collections as part of the evolving Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Access (DEIA) movement.

Keywords: antiracism, social justice, ebooks, engagement

Introduction

The murder of George Floyd by Minneapolis police officer Derek Chauvin sparked global interest in the Black Lives Matter Movement (BLM). Higher education institutions renewed their commitments to support equity, diversity, and inclusion as well as social justice and antiracism. After The Ohio State University (OSU) President Michael V. Drake issued a statement to more deeply engage social justice practices and center antiracism within our university, University Libraries released a statement intentionally committing the organization to prioritize this work.¹

The Inclusion, Diversity, Equity, Access and Social Justice (IDEAS) Committee advises University Libraries administration on policies, provides recommendations and maintains programs designed to advance a culture of diversity, inclusion, access, and social justice. In 2020, IDEAS sponsored the "Time is Now," a DEIA reading, watching, and discussing group. Damon Jaggars, Vice Provost and Dean of University Libraries began a series of virtual chats, "Coffee with Damon," to discuss university polices, COVID-19, and social justice issues.



In June 2020 the Vice Provost for Diversity and Inclusion and Chief Diversity Officer, Office of Diversity, and Inclusion (ODI) reached out to Jaggars to inquire about a collaboration between ODI and University Libraries to help create an online portal of reading materials and videos on topics related to social inequities, racism, implicit bias, and racial disparities. Constituents across the university were repeatedly contacting ODI to ask for resources to enhance multicultural and social justice awareness, and to build out knowledge, develop skills, and enhance relationships. The University Libraries' African American and African Studies (AAAS) Librarian and Collections Strategist were asked to work with ODI's Director of Strategic Diversity Planning, Training, and Assessment to explore how best to identify and provide campus-wide access at scale to resources that broadly support antiracism education.

After the initial meeting between the two units' representatives occurred, several opportunities and challenges were evident, but it was clear University Libraries was well positioned to respond due to our liaison engagement model.² Many of the titles on the first list discussed were already part of our collection as eBooks, but many were restricted to single-user access licenses. The timing of the collaboration request, at the end of the fiscal year, meant committing an as-yet-unknown number of financial resources before University Libraries received any budget confirmation for the next fiscal year. In addition, the impact of the COVID-19 university state of emergency on necessary formats (i.e., electronic), potential budget needs, and staff availability in a remote working environment was as yet unknown. This paper will detail how each of these opportunities and challenges was addressed by the University Libraries librarians in the collaboration with ODI to successfully result in resource lists and support guides for access across campus by the beginning of fall semester 2020.

Background

University Libraries' staff, services, and collections were well prepared for ODI Vice Provost and Chief Diversity Officer Dr. James L. Moore's request for an antiracism resource page and materials. University Libraries' Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPoC) staff and their allies are responsible for the ongoing prioritization and development of DEIA collections; African American students and their allies have always advocated for full inclusion in all university functions and services including University Libraries collections.

This collections work in the library aligned with the founding of the African American and African Studies Department (AAAS) at OSU during the 1960's Black Nationalist movement. The article, "A Ruckus on High Street: The Birth of Black Studies at The Ohio State University," by Thomas Albright, Judson L. Jeffries, and N. Michael Goecke details the significant milestones from the founding of the Black Student Union (BSU) at Ohio State in response to the university's racial discrimination policies. On April 26, 1968, the BSU occupied the University's administration business office and demanded, the hiring of BIPoC faculty, the teaching of African American history and culture courses, and an end to off-campus housing discrimination. University administration acted slowly to respond to these and subsequent demands for racial equity. In October 1969, the Black Studies Program was established as an academic division at OSU. During the academic year, Afro-Am, formerly BSU, delivered "Nineteen Demands" to the university's Student Affairs Office. These "Nineteen Demands" clarified specific needs of the African American university community. Specifically, the fifteenth demanded, "A degree-granting department in the field of 'Afro-American Studies' be established capable of granting a B.A. with the potentials of expanding." The Black Studies Program achieved formal department status in 1972.3



The Librarian in the Community

In 2011, University Libraries formally adopted an "Engaged Librarian Framework" (ELF) for library liaison roles. While the ELF provided a rubric for engagement, African American librarians at University Libraries were already embedded in the Black campus community as a response to systemic racism. These librarians laid the groundwork for the pillars of engagement, research consultation, collection development, teaching and learning, and scholarly communication. Academic African American librarians have always dedicated their positions and skills to the betterment of the campus community. 5

Mary D. Walters, who was the Acquisitions Librarian throughout this time, chronicles the history of establishing the Black Studies Library at The Ohio State University in her chapter, "A Black Library in a White University." During the 1960s African American faculty, staff, and students gathered in informal and formal settings to confront institutional racism. Walters and her library colleagues Mary P. Key and Arline M. Rollins were outspoken and supportive members of the Black Studies Division Library Committee. This committee proposed a separate Black Studies Library (BSL), which would provide a safe space staffed with personnel who were sensitive to the needs of African American students. The BSL would develop programs and collections to support the Black Studies Division curriculum and research by systematically acquiring research materials on African Americans. The committee further proposed an oral history collection be initiated to house the personal testimony of campus and community personalities. BSL staff would work collaboratively with other library units to enable maximum service for all students.6

In 1969, the committee submitted the BSL proposal, which was responsible for setting University Libraries' administrative priorities, to the

University Libraries' Library Council for approval. Prior to council approval, the proposal was approved by the College of Arts and Sciences, Faculty Council, and The Faculty Senate. On November 10, 1971, the BSL in Thompson Library was dedicated.

Creating a Collection

With the establishment of the BSL, Walters undertook the charge of building a collection for this new library. As Walters notes, building an African American subject collection is a daunting task as decades of indifference to African American research materials and topics exposed the implicit racism of Predominantly White Institutions (PWI). In the 1960s, PWI academic libraries were caught off guard by the demand for a more inclusive collection. Book and journal selection were traditionally overseen by departmental faculty. This method of material selection changed with the hiring of professional librarians.⁷

Walters was influenced by early African American bibliographical pioneers Arthur A. Schomburg and Dorothy Porter West. She used their collection assessment methodology to develop a BSL collection comprised of print, analog, and physical materials. Walters, as an acquisitions librarian, comprehended the need for a methodical review of current OSU library holdings to discover gaps of core materials on African Americans. As noted in her chapter, Walters used a four-part assessment that included compiling an inventory from library holdings and comparing/contrasting the compiled inventory with the *National Union Catalog*, bibliographies, and bookstore catalogs.⁸

Walters relied upon the Library of Congress Subject Headings (LCSH) and Library of Congress Classification shelf list to compile the inhouse bibliography. The interdisciplinary nature of African American Studies complicated the compiling of Africana titles from the shelf list or



browsing the closed stacks. Bias in LOC classification hierarchies, such as: DT: African history and general cultures, E 184 - E 185: African American history, HT 601 - HT 1595: Class, race, slavery (general) hid book titles from the bibliography. In addition, she had to manually check the shelf list catalog cards for book titles. She physically checked OSU's card catalog's author and subject headings, since University Libraries' automated catalog, Library Circulation System (LCS), was in the development stage, and therefore not reliable for the compilation of this bibli-

ography. The assessment included the comparing/contrasting of the compiled bibliography against the *Dictionary Catalog of the Schomburg Collection of Negro Literature and History,* African American bibliographies and Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU) library bulletins and book lists, African American published bibliographies and bookstore catalogs, publisher catalogs, and library routing lists. After completion, the committee sought the input of the Black campus community for additional materials including microforms and serials. ¹⁰

Table 1. Bibliographies and Catalogs Used in Collection Assessment

Author	Title
Moorland Foundation, and Dorothy Porter Wes- ley	A Catalogue of the African Collection in the Moorland Foundation, Howard University Library
Negro Bibliographic and Research Center	Bibliographic Survey, the Negro in Print.
New York Public Library	The Negro, a Selected Bibliography Compiled by the 135 th Street Branch Library Situated in Negro Harlem.
Schomburg Collection of Negro Literature and History	Dictionary Catalog of the Schomburg Collection of Negro Literature and History: First Supplement.
Wesley, Dorothy Porter	Early American Negro Writings: A Bibliographical Study

The completed bibliographies Afro-Americana: A Comprehensive Bibliography of Resource Materials in the Ohio State University Libraries by or About Black Americans and Changing the African American Image Through History: Black History Holdings of the Ohio State University Libraries assisted other

libraries in their development of African American subject collections. ¹¹ Walters' bibliographies performed as pathfinders to finding vetted resources for research on African Americans. These pathfinders are the precursors of web-



based subject guides that provide a search strategy for locating books, serials, and reference materials for a specific field or discipline.

After its founding, the librarian, and staff of the BSL collaborated with ODI. These partnerships included developing information literacy instruction for the Morrill Scholars Program (formerly known as the Minority Scholarship Program) and the Young Scholars Program. ¹² This collaboration around antiracism resources was the continuation of a rich partnership that aimed to enrich the lives of under-represented student populations.

Action Steps to Collaborate

Title Selection

During the collaboration with ODI over the summer of 2020, the AAAS Librarian and staff from ODI worked together closely to curate an initial list of eighteen antiracism titles to build read and watch lists around. For the purposes of the collaboration, the AAAS Librarian and staff from ODI broadly used the following definition of antiracism as provided by Ibram X. Kendi: "an antiracist idea is any idea that suggests the racial groups are equals in all their apparent differences – that there is nothing right or wrong with any racial group...antiracist ideas argue that racist policies are the cause of racist inequities. 13 The selected titles would be used to support campus-wide group discussions as various units across campus created spaces for community members to interact with this content. The AAAS Librarian created accompanying reading guides for several of the titles as well.

University Libraries was well prepared as a partner in this collaboration. From the eighteen titles of the initial list, which included three films and fifteen e-books, the libraries provided some level of access to sixteen titles. The three films were included on campus-wide streaming video platforms Kanopy and Swank, to which li-

censes were extended access after years-long pilots trialing both platforms in 2019. We provided access to thirteen of the book titles in some format, including several with multiple print copies in addition to an e-book copy.

Format and Access

University Libraries has been preferring e-books as a format in our collection building for over seven years, while making exceptions depending on academic discipline or user-requested format as needed. Within this "e-preferred" collections environment, in the last three fiscal years the acquisitions strategy has shifted to prioritize the maximum simultaneous users available for selection in GOBI Library Solutions, our acquisitions ordering system. This means if unlimited simultaneous users are an option, it would be preferred over three simultaneous users, which is in turn preferred over one simultaneous user. In addition, University Libraries purchases, by default, unlimited simultaneous user access to several front-list publisher e-book collections via our consortia (OhioLINK and the Big Ten Academic Alliance). The initial planning of the collaboration with ODI occurred during the COVID-19 pandemic when the physical collection of University Libraries was still inaccessible to users, so the focus was solely on expanding electronic access to these titles, and not on selecting print copies. Electronic formats also aided in accessibility for the broader campus community.

Four of the thirteen books that were already part of our collection had unlimited simultaneous user access, while three had three-simultaneous user access and six allowed only single-user access. A key part of the collaboration between University Libraries and ODI was in explaining inherent challenges in the academic e-book marketplace, particularly with simultaneous user limits determined by the publisher to be sold by limited vendors on licensed platforms. Given



the intent of the collaboration was to source resources for reading and watching groups which would likely require multiple users accessing a particular title at the same time, we decided on purchasing or expanding access up to ten simultaneous users where unlimited options were unavailable, dependent on cost.

 Table 2. Selected Antiracism Titles and Procured Simultaneous User Access

Title	Author or Director	E-book or Film	Number of Simultaneous Users
Between the World and Me	Coates, Ta-Nehisi	e-book	Expanded to 6
How to Be an Antiracist	Kendi, Ibram X.	e-book	Expanded to 10
How to Be Less Stupid about Race: On Racism, White Supremacy, and the Racial Divide	Fleming, Crystal M.	e-book	Expanded to 10
I am Not Your Negro	Peck, Raoul	film	Unlimited
I Am Not Your Negro: A Docologue	Baron, Jaimie and Fuhs, Kristen	e-book	Unlimited
If Beale Street Could Talk	Jenkins, Barry	film	Unlimited
Just Mercy: A Story of Justice and Redemption	Stevenson, Bryan	e-book	Expanded to 10
Me and White Supremacy: Combat Racism, Change the World, and Become a Good Ancestor	Saad, Layla F.	e-book	Unlimited
Microaggressions and Modern Racism: Endur- ance and Evolution	Levchak, Charisse C.	e-book	Unlimited
The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblind- ness	Alexander, Michelle	e-book	Unlimited



Policing the Black Man: Arrest, Prosecution, and Imprisonment	Davis, Angela J.	e-book	Purchased 10
Selma	DuVernay, Ava	film	Unlimited
So You Want To Talk About Race	Oluo, Ijeoma	e-book	Expanded to 10
Stamped from the Begin- ning: The Definitive His- tory of Racist Ideas in America	Kendi, Ibram X.	e-book	Purchased 10
We Want to Do More Than Survive: Abolition- ist Teaching and the Pursuit of Educational Freedom	Love, Bettina L.	e-book	Expanded to 10
White Fragility: Why It's So Hard for White People to Talk About Racism	DiAngelo, Robin	e-book	Expanded to 10
White Rage: The Unspo- ken Truth of Our Racial Divide	Anderson, Carol	e-book	Expanded to 10
Why Are All the Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria	Tatum, Beverly Daniel	e-book	Expanded to 10

Funding

The initial meeting between University Libraries and ODI occurred at the very end of fiscal year 2020, when materials budget funds were already completely expended. Titles were selected and then analyzed for acquisitions options early in the next fiscal year before there was any clarity on the materials budget, which was further delayed due to the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. The Collections Strategist identified the central user-initiated book request fund to pay

for the costs to purchase and expand access to titles selected as part of this collaboration. This fund, created solely to fund direct user requests, was one of the few prioritized, active funds in the materials budget early in the fiscal year, months before subject or endowment funds would be available for use. While University Libraries was committed to meet the expressed needs of the collaboration with ODI, the Collections Strategist did build in some contingencies in utilizing endowment funds, when available,



should additional funds be needed later in the fiscal year.

Reading Guides

The AAAS Librarian undertook the identification and selection of additional book titles and other resources for the ODI Resources page. This collaboration includes reviewing previous published LibGuides and consultation with subject librarians at OSU and beyond. A new generation of BIPoC and library allies forged a new atmosphere for the advancement of antiracism and social justice activism that included the creation of LibGuides and programs. LibGuides created and revised include: an antiracism guide - "Antiracism: Resources for Research, Advocacy, & Activism" (https://guides.osu.edu/antiracism); reading guides - "How to be an Antiracist" (https://guides.osu.edu/antiracist), "Just Mercy: A Story of Justice and Redemption" (https://guides.osu.edu/justmercy), "The Souls of Black Folk" (https://guides.osu.edu/soulsofblackfolk), "White Fragility: Why It's So Hard for White People to Talk About Racism" (https://guides.osu.edu/whitefragility); and "Africana Studies: Guide to Africana Studies Resources" (https://guides.osu.edu/africana).

Learning Through Collaboration

The ODI Racial Justice Resources webpage was launched at the beginning of fall semester 2020.¹⁴ The availability of the resources was first announced to diversity officers across campus, and with a campus-wide email announcement from ODI's Vice Provost Moore following within a few weeks.

Campus Engagement

The demand for antiracism and social justice resources began in 2012 with the murder of Trayvon Martin and the founding of BLM. The 2014 killing of Michael Brown, Jr. in Ferguson, Missouri pushed the campus community to hold marches, meetings, and sit-ins in support of

BLM. Through engagement with campus and being responsive to research, curricular, and co-curricular needs, University Libraries was actively purchasing access to antiracism book and media content.

In addition, in 2014 the Diversity and Inclusion Committee was formed. Now IDEAS, this committee is comprised of dedicated faculty and staff who develop engaging programming to advance a culture of diversity and inclusion in University Libraries, including hosting speakers and creating exhibits that highlight a variety of backgrounds and experiences. University Libraries' broader exhibition and programming efforts increasingly and purposefully include a diversity of perspectives on the topics presented. In 2014 IDEAS introduced the award-winning, "Tuesdays @ Thompson", a speaker series designed to discuss diversity and social justice issues by restoring the tradition of scholarly conversation over afternoon tea.15 By the time the inquiry to collaborate came to University Libraries from ODI, the AAAS Librarian, who is also an affiliated faculty member of the AAAS department, was already deeply entrenched in campus social justice movements.

Fiscal Management and Collections Practices

University Libraries had offered centralized user-initiated purchase request processes for two fiscal years at the time of this collaboration. These processes were designed to be user-facing, with intake forms for different library services, such as course reserves, streaming media, and single book requests for research or learning, and removed subject librarians from the workflow. Each intake process is managed by a library staff member in technical services units (Collection Strategy, Access Services, Interlibrary Services) and is designed to be responsive to the requestor; the goal of the process is to purchase what is requested, but there are checks in the workflow to ensure the correct item and format is purchased. Central funds were created



from the materials budget to fund these processes by reallocating funds from circulating collections subject funds. There is a general price cap of \$300 for user-initiated purchase requests, meaning that once the item is verified against library holdings and the format is confirmed, if the price is less than \$300 it moves forward to be purchased. Exceptions to the price cap, or the purchase of multiple copies, are routed to the Collections Strategist for approval. The user-initiated purchase request processes occur anytime during the fiscal year; University Libraries is committed to meeting our users' expressed needs at any time during the fiscal year.

The materials purchased as part of the collaboration with ODI were treated as exceptions in the user-initiated purchase request process, which enabled the purchases to occur at the very beginning of a new fiscal year before the total materials budget was confirmed and available for expending. Exceptions were also made for the number of "copies" or simultaneous users available per e-book title. Standard acquisitions practice at University Libraries is to purchase one copy of a title at the highest simultaneous user limit available at the time of selection, and purchase additional copies at the request of users if an unlimited simultaneous user option is not available. For this collaboration, the AAAS Librarian and Collections Strategist decided with ODI staff to proactively purchase multiple copies of limited (one or three) simultaneous user ebooks, when available, to ensure simultaneous access as these titles might be recommended or assigned from various professors across the university. University Libraries and ODI wanted to lower barriers to access these antiracism titles to make engaging with them easy for university constituents. This collaboration allowed us to explore expanding current user-initiated workflows to see how we could best accomplish our goals.

While it made sense to leverage and modify user-initiated workflows to move forward with

an initial corpus of antiracism titles, as additional titles are requested by ODI, we may identify different funding sources in the future. As University Libraries continues to engage internally about how to best support social justice in our diverse collections' environment, it may make sense to reallocate current materials budget funds to create new funds to specifically support collections building in this area. Or perhaps general use endowment funds which sit outside the materials budget could be intentionally expended on social justice materials. This work is ongoing and will continue to be responsive to the expressed needs of our constituents.

Marketplace Limitations

University Libraries had to work around inherent challenges within the academic library ebook marketplace to meet the goals of the collaboration with ODI. Eleven of the fifteen antiracism e-book titles identified for this project contained simultaneous user limits. In order to provide access for reading group activity, which assumes the likely simultaneous access of any particular title, University Libraries had to inefficiently purchase multiple e-book copies to build out more capacity for potential simultaneous use. The structure of this marketplace, with purchase options set solely by the copyright holder of the book (usually the publisher) and the library vendor platform (mainly ProQuest eBook Central or EBSCO eBooks for this collaboration) offers no leverage for the academic library customer. 16 Noting this disparity, the Collections Strategist and Acquisitions Librarian explored potential alternatives such as OverDrive, but several the needed titles were not available. As publishers and e-book vendors look to capitalize on the increased demands in the academic library market for antiracism and social justice titles, and equity, diversity, and inclusion content more broadly, this will continue to be a challenge.17



Conclusion and Future Considerations

University Libraries was well positioned for a successful collaboration with ODI to support their request to make antiracism resources more widely available for the campus community. By having subject librarians actively engaging as liaisons to both academic departments and nonacademic units as part of our service model, the ask was easily triaged to a librarian with subject matter expertise and experience in previously collaborating with ODI. The rich collections built over several decades by librarians dedicated to support Black Studies across myriad academic disciplines meant we already had access to many of the antiracism titles identified during this collaboration; this emerging subject area was already part of the collecting scope of the AAAS Librarian. In addition, the user-initiated purchase request workflow likely sourced antiracism titles into the University Libraries collection directly from users. By making an exception to this workflow, the Collections Strategist was able to facilitate the purchase of multiple e-book "copies" to meet the simultaneous user access needs to support reading groups with dedicated, available funding at a challenging time in the fiscal year. Prioritizing this work made achieving the deliverable of ODI communicating to campus-wide dissemination channels the

availability of these resources to support personal and group enrichment by the start of fall semester 2020 a success.

Future Considerations

There is clear interest in the academic library community to explore solutions to provide userfriendly, barrier-free access to these important materials that straddle the boundaries between research, curricular, co-curricular, professional development, and continuing education needs. With the academic library e-book marketplace structured solely toward the priorities and needs of the publishers and vendors, how can the needs of the academic library customer be expressed at scale to effect change? Who are the right potential partners? How do we scale up the labor-intensive work around the collection building of individual librarians, such as the AAAS Librarian, to be most successful, particularly without continuing to burden BIPoC colleagues?¹⁸ It may take large academic library customers, such as The Ohio State University Libraries, working both individually and collectively via our consortia partners such as OhioLINK and the Big Ten Academic Alliance (BTAA) to collaborate with e-book vendors in partnership rather than in traditional customer roles, to expand user options while equitably and fairly compensating authors.



¹ Michael V. Drake "Addressing Institutional Racism: Ohio State Office of the President." Addressing Institutional Racism. Ohio State Office of the President, June 10, 2020. https://president.osu.edu/story/addressing-racism-now; Ohio State University Libraries. 2020. A Statement from University Libraries Supporting Black Lives Matter, https://libraries-supporting-black-lives-matter.

² José O. Díaz, "The Roles of Engagement at The Ohio State University Libraries: Thoughts from an Early Adopter." *Reference Librarian* 55, no. 3, 224–33,

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- ¹³ Ibram X. Kendi, *How to Be an Antiracist*. (New York, NY: One World, 2019), 20.
- ¹⁴ Office of Diversity and Inclusion, "Racial Justice Resources," The Ohio State University, https://odi.osu.edu/racial-justice-resources.
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- ¹⁸ Peace Ossom-Williamson, Jamia Williams, Xan Goodman, Christian I. J. Minter, & Ayaba Logan, "Starting with I: Combating Anti-Blackness in Libraries," *Medical Reference Services Quarterly* 40, no. 2, 139-150.

