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Successful Equity, Diversity, and Inclusivity (EDI) Initiatives in Progressive Public Libraries and their Communities

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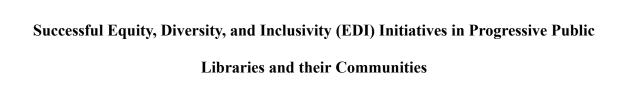jamesonpaulghalioungui@gmail.com

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Libraries and their Communities

Jameson Ghalioungui

Introduction:

Equity, Diversity, and Inclusivity (EDI) initiatives in public libraries are noble and endless endeavors that take many forms of action. Obviously, no one community, nor library, is the same. Consequently, no one community and/or library-centered EDI journey is the same. However, interestingly, progressive Illinois (IL) state libraries have walked the same roads. Many progressive IL libraries have taken the important first step by acknowledging, and sometimes down-right apologizing (Evanston Public Library, 2020), for acts of underrepresentation. Interestingly, these realizations have led to a shift in priority and strategic focus resulting in many of these libraries to take action by contracting consultants to conduct full-scale equity assessments. Conclusions from these kinds of equity assessments have helped to contextualize and legitimize EDI-focused strategic planning decisions and outcomes for the Downers Grove Public Library, Evanston Public Library, Glen Ellyn Public Library, and Oak Park Public Library, just to name a few. Therefore, the goal of this paper is to contextualize these EDI consultations and/or interventions and assess their ability to empower public libraries and their communities to make change beyond and through the use of anti-hate statements, mission statements, or vision statements. Indeed, there is very little research and discourse measuring the success of these interventions. Another goal of this paper is to emphasize the highly specific role and experience these EDI consultation groups have and to stress the fact that these consultants are not the ones directly impacted by the large-scale library and community change that can result from EDI consultation.

To begin, library and information science (LIS)'s progressivity and historic commitment to EDI work will be discussed. However, to remain historical, it should be stressed that associating progressive library work predating the 2010s as "EDI" or "anti-racism" work would

be incorrect. Nevertheless, the progressivity of each era will be acknowledged to contextualize the ALA as a historically progressive institution that empowers public libraries. In doing so, the historic, high-level issue of libraries "falling short" of diversification goals, despite efforts (Foy, 2021, p. 684) will be addressed. Next, the modern prevalence of EDI consultation/intervention will be demonstrated. Furthermore, the importance, information, purpose, and intent of community and/or library-centered EDI consultation and/or intervention in facilitating these journeys will be elaborated on. Importantly, for the first time, the EDI work of a specific subset of IL public libraries and the overall success of these consultations/interventions will be assessed in relation to a set of suggested actionable items determined after consultation/intervention. The concrete outputs of these IL public libraries following intervention/consultation will be assessed in terms of their ability to "close the gaps" (Ghalioungui, 2022, pg. 9) and will represent the ways in which public libraries are "following through" with their suggested EDI journey. Lastly, a number of challenges preventing public libraries from conducting EDI work will be addressed and suggestions towards practicing EDI post-consultation and/or intervention will be discussed along with general suggestions and guidance adapted from academic library-centered discourse. Altogether, this paper seeks to resemble a coherent snapshot of progressive IL public libraries' EDI initiatives in the 2020's and ensure this progress is remembered and may be improved upon.

The ALA's Historic Commitment to EDI Work:

The ALA's progressivity can be extended since its inception in 1876. Outdated policies retained in a historical file at the ALA Headquarters and online also helps to solidify the ALA's historic commitment to EDI (ALA, 2010). The ALA hosts ALA Committee meeting minutes, a detailed history (ALA, 2013), outdated policies online, among other resources, which provides a

rich historical trail. The purpose of this section is to select examples of policy change and/or behavior that demonstrate the ALA's historic progressivity and eventual commitment to EDI. Secondly, the purpose of this section is to demonstrate that the issues expressed throughout the ALA's existence are frustratingly longstanding. Again, it should be stressed that "EDI" or "anti-racism" work is a relatively new concept and associating the ALA's progressive work before the 2010s as such would be ahistorical. The language and priorities of each era of the ALA's history will be contextualized. Of course, this is not complete history. Providing a complete history would be beyond the scope of this paper. But, a thorough demonstration of the ALA's historic progressivity will be provided.

ALA EDI 1886-1920's:

Selections from *Details of ALA History*, specially the History by Decade section, help to demonstrate the ALA's historic progressivity. This is especially the case for examples early in the association's career where such primary resources are difficult to locate. Nevertheless, since the organization's inception in 1886, the ALA has demonstrated and advocated progressive values.

States the ALA, "[W]orking with people of all races and sexes has been a goal since early in ALA history. Thirteen of the original members present at the founding of ALA were women" (ALA, 2013). In 1911, "Theresa West Elmendorf was elected the first woman ALA President: 19 years before women could vote in American elections" (ALA, 2013). In 1921, the first ALA round table met to encourage library patron diversity. ALA's Work with Negroes Round Table began to examine the state of equitable access to library materials for African-Americans. The round table continued for two years before being disbanded. Tensions flared between librarians in the north and the south causing the ALA to suspend the round table. Additionally in the same

year, Thomas Fountain Blue was the first African-American to address an ALA conference. He spoke concerning the survey conducted by this roundtable (ALA, 2013).

ALA EDI 1930s:

In 1939, the Library Bill of Rights of Rights was adopted (ALA, 2013). The original version of the Bill was drafted by Forest Spaulding and was adopted first by the Des Moines Public Library in 1938. The following year, it was adopted by the ALA including a preamble that read in part:

> *"Today indications in many parts of the world point to growing intolerance, suppression of free speech, and censorship affecting the rights of minorities and individuals"*
>
> -(Eschete, 2021)

The preamble varies slightly from the 1938 draft. However, the sentiment remains the same. The Bill represents a set of policies to best serve the interests of *all* who use free public library services regardless of relevant associations at the time such as nationality, race, sex, political association, religious association etc. Of course, at this time, the concepts of gender and sexual identity had not necessarily surfaced. While the progressivity of this Bill should be stressed, so should the specific divides and associations the Bill was trying to mediate. Indeed, it is ahistorical to read current meanings into older works. The 1938 draft can be found online in an ALA sponsored Intellectual Freedom Blog post, while the original 1939 Bill is preserved in the American Library Association Institutional Repository (ALAIR).

In both the 1938 draft and 1939 Bill, the notion of intellectual freedom and freedom of speech are reiterated:

> *"Books and other reading matter selected for purchase from the public funds should be chosen because of value and interest to people of the community, and in no case should the selection be influenced by the race or nationality or the political or religious views of the writers."*
>
> -(American Library Association, 1939)

Democratic acquisition of books is inherently an equitable process that is fair and impartial, when it is achieved, and despite the lack of pertinence towards the modern concept and notion of equity at the time. Importantly, it should be stressed that democratic acquisition of books is problematic when characterized as strictly or primarily a progressive ideal. This is especially the case today as some progressives of the leftist-elite are "no longer defenders of free expression," but are equally problematic censors of the "contrasting viewpoints" (Hanson, 2020). Nevertheless, continuing:

> *"As far as available material permits, all sides of questions on which differences of opinion exist should be represented fairly and adequately in thc books and other reading matter purchased for public use."*
>
> -(American Library Association, 1939)

In both the 1938 draft and 1939 Bill, this statement is the same and advocated for an equitable information environment where all sides are represented equally, fairly, and justly. Thirdly:

> *"The library as an institution to educate for democratic living should especially welcome the use of its meeting rooms for socially useful and cultural activities and the discussion of current public questions. Library meeting rooms should be available on actual equal terms to all groups in the community regardless of their beliefs or affiliations."*
>
> -(American Library Association, 1939)

The library is described as a democratic space for *all* in this statement, regardless of the pertinent beliefs or affiliations at the time. Anyone is welcome to use its meeting rooms and space regardless of the pertinent beliefs and affiliations. Again, as stressed earlier, the modern concepts of gender and sexual identity had not yet surfaced.

The largest difference between the 1938 draft and 1939 Bill is the omission of a statement pertaining to the acquisition of published materials/propaganda from "organized, religious, political, fraternal, class, or regional sects, societies, or similar groups, and of institutions controlled by such." These items are to be associated as "gifts," and will be made available to library users "without discrimination" as it is "impossible" to purchase publications from all groups and it would be "unjust discrimination" to purchase those of some and not others (Escete, 2021). Despite this omission, its sentiment is carried within the first and second policies of the Bill.

The 1939 Bill of Rights has since gone through many revisions. However, especially in its original composition, the Bill *represents* the ALA's advocating for an equitable, diverse, and inclusive information environment that represents all, despite the absence of the modern notions of these concepts. But, importantly, it *demonstrates* the institution's significant progressivity for the time.

ALA EDI 1940's-1970's:

Returning to the selections from History by Decade of the *Details of ALA History* page (ALA, 2013), the ALA's historic progressivity is continued. However, frustratingly, "1956 saw the first integrated annual conference in Miami Beach after years of avoiding the South as a meeting place due to racial segregation" (ALA, 2013). The decision to host the annual conference in the South at this time was confusing. Indeed, throughout 1948-1964, the 1956 conference saw the lowest number of attendees at 2,866 (ALA, 2010). This could also be because of the inconvenient and decentralized location of the conference. The Civil Rights Act of 1964 of course marked an important milestone ending segregation. As a result, the ALA were significantly better supported when selecting a conference location for their all-inclusive meetings. Nevertheless, the active decision to avoid Southern meeting places due to racial segregation issues (aside from 1956), is an example of the ALA's historic commitment to equity, diversity, and inclusivity, despite the absence of the modern notions of these concepts at this time.

Additionally, the role of the ALA in the social movement was reflected in a number of actions during the 1960s. For example, the Office for Intellectual Freedom was established in 1967 and the Freedom to Read Foundation was recreated in 1969 (ALA, 2013). Indeed,

according to the ALA, "social movements are used to change existing social patterns. Causes may be promoted through the actions of individual librarians or by the work of social institutions like the American Library Association" (ALA, 2013).

Another example comes in the form of conducting explicit diversity and recruitment analyses with a focus on minority concerns. For example, at the 1968 Kansas City Annual Council, a Report to the Council was made pertaining to results from *Access to Public Libraries: Report of the 1967 Survey of Librarians* (1967). The report probed librarians on what *access* and *equal access* means and the overall interest level in conducting more minority concern related research. A high interest level was documented, along with a set of recommendations including:

1. *"It is recommended that studies be made to determine location, size, and kinds of library facilities basic to effective service to members of minority groups.*

2. *It is recommended that studies be made to determine the adequacy of materials to meet the needs and interests of minority and other special groups.*

3. *It is recommended that a study of non-users of public libraries be made to determine characteristics of non-users, user needs, and approaches to minority group service.*

4. *It is recommended that studies be made to determine appropriate educational programs for librarians and in-service training of staff for more effective service to members of minority groups.*

5. *It is recommended that a study be made to determine opportunities for employment and advancement of members of minority groups in libraries toward the end of furthering employment and advancement opportunities in American Libraries."*

<div align="right">-(American Library Association, 1968)</div>

This survey and report legitimized, for the first time, a need for action and for libraries to better represent the underrepresented and for workplace diversity to increase. However, jumping forward for a moment, *Task Force on Library-and Information Services to Cultural Minorities: Report* (1983) asserts:

> *"The issue of minority participation in the library profession has gained widespread attention since the 1960's and has resulted in efforts to improve the opportunities for minorities in the field. These early efforts consist of increased-recruitment, legislation, funding of training programs, and employment in greater numbers. The profession has yet to assess the impact of these developments on libraries and librarianship. The limited data available suggests little improvement or change in the status of minorities; therefore, the "minority issue" in the 1980's remains the same as in the 1960's. Minorities are underrepresented in the profession as a whole and are disproportionately overrepresented in the lowest paying positions.*

-(National Commission on Libraries and Information Science, 1983, pg. 13)

This quote begins to echo the second purpose of this section: to demonstrate that the issues expressed throughout the ALA's existence are frustratingly still prevalent today and are longstanding. Importantly, minority concerns of the 1960's remained an issue in the 1980's with "little improvement," being done to "close the gaps" (National Commission on Libraries and Information Science, 1983, pg. 13; Ghalioungui, 2022, pg. 9).

Nevertheless, since 1969, members of the Social Responsibilities Round Table (SRRT) have worked to make the ALA more democratic. They have also worked to promote a more progressive agenda. Throughout this paper, the ALA has been described as "democratic," and "progressive," these values are continued by this round table. Continuing, in 1970, the Black Caucus of the American Library Association (BCALA) was formed at the ALA Midwinter Meeting in Chicago (ALA, 2013). In 1976, ALA saw its first African-American president, Clara Stanton Jones (ALA, 2013).

Lastly, the 1970's were a profound time for the lesbian and gay community. The Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, and Transgender Round Table (GLBTRT) of the ALA was founded in 1970 as ALA's Task Force on Gay Liberation. It is the nation's first gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender professional organization (ALA, 2012). In the 1970s the group saw publication and consistent revision of *A Gay Bibliography* by the Task Force on Gay Liberation. 5 publications and a supplement spanned from 1970-1976. Additionally, the publication of the GLTF Newsletter helped publicize the efforts of this committee.

ALA EDI 1980's:

The 1980's marked an important time for the ALA and its EDI work, again, despite the absence of the modern notions surrounding the concept of EDI. At the very least, the concept and

need for diversity in the workplace is prioritized at this time. This came in the form of critical

diversity assessment and policy change that was profoundly asserted as a priority in 1968

(American Library Association, 1968). In 1981, the ALA provided the National Commission on

Libraries and Information Science (NCLIS) Task Force the opportunity to collect "current and

reliable information that would aid in developing a viable program, and to give recommendations

for strengthening and promoting library services for minorities" (National Commission on

Libraries and Information Science, 1983, pg. xii). In addition to asserting the persistent minority

concerns of the 1960s, the article shares a set of recruitment statistics from *The Racial, Ethnic,*

and Sexual Composition of Library Staff in Academic and Public Libraries (1981) demonstrating

that the despite commitment and efforts, the majority of library staff (88.2%) are white (National

Commission on Libraries and Information Science, 1983). Again, these issues are proven to be

longstanding. Also in 1983, ALA Council approved establishment of the Ethnic Materials

Information Exchange Round Table (EMIERT); name changed to Ethnic and Multicultural

Information Exchange Round Table in 1989 (American Library Association, 2013).

> *Equity at Issue: Library Services to the Nation's Four Minority Groups* (1986), is a very

important document which responds to libraries being "inhospitable" (American Library

Association, 1986, pg. 225), to minorities. Specifically, *Equity at Issue* (1986) responds to a

"retrenchment" in the quality of library programs & services and the decline in the recruitment of

minorities to the profession (American Library Association, 1986, pg. 225). Some of the most

important elements of the report include a reiteration of two studies published by the ALA Office

for Library Personnel Resources in 1981 (previously discussed) and 1986 entitled *The Racial,*

Ethnic, and Sexual Composition of Library Staff in Academic and Public Libraries. *Equity at*

Issue (1986) shares that, despite minority concerns, between 1980 and 1985, the percentage of

white library workers actually increased from 88.2% to 88.5% (American Library Association, 1986). The remaining ~11% of library workers were American Indian/Alaskan Native, Asian/Pacific Islander, Black or Hispanic, and saw little to no increase in recruitment during these survey periods (American Library Association, 1986).

ALA EDI 1990's:

In 1997, the ALA began issuing Spectrum Scholarships. "The Spectrum Scholarship Program actively recruits and provides scholarships to American Indian/Alaska Native, Asian, Black/African American, Hispanic/Latino, Middle Eastern and North African, and/or Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander students to assist them with obtaining a graduate degree and leadership positions within the profession and ALA" (American Library Association, 2017). Since then, over 1,300 Spectrum Scholarships Awards have been given (American Library Association, 2022).

In 1998 the ALA Council voted commitment to five Key Action Areas as guiding principles for directing the Association's energies and resources: Diversity, Equity of Access, Education and Continuous Learning, Intellectual Freedom, and 21st Century Literacy (ALA, 2013). Note the inclusion of Diversity and Equity of Access. Also in 1998, many revisions were made to Section 60, Minority Concerns, of the ALA Policy Manual. On July 1st, 1998, the ALA Conference Council/Executive Board/Membership Information Session made changes (largely) in the form of Key Action Item #5. Key Action #5 pertained to a series of modifications to ALA Policy 60 entitled Minority Concerns. Most of the policy revisions are centered around actively changing the language surrounding hispanic persons/latinos and persons with disabilities within

to make the policies feel more respectful, equitable, and inclusive (American Library Association, 2007).

In 1999, the Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL), a division of the ALA, published an article by Ronald G. Edwards entitled *Recruiting More Minorities to the Library Profession: Responding to the Need for Diversity.* The article asserted that the issue of recruiting a diverse population to the library profession has been a concern for many years. The library literature is replete with articles and reports documenting this issue. Task forces, committees, and focus groups have been formed to discuss this situation and provide recommendations. Further asserting that comparatively "little progress" (Edwards, 1999, pg. 1), has occurred regarding the recruitment of minorities into the library profession. Clearly, the issues continued to be longstanding.

ALA EDI 2000's and More Significant ALA Policy Manual Revisions:

In 2001, the ALA Council unanimously approved the Library Services for People with Disability. The policy was written by the Americans with Disabilities Act Assembly, a representational group administered by the Association of Specialized and Cooperative Library Agencies (ASCLA), a division of the ALA. With a focus on "universal design," and "assistive technology," design philosophies, the policy is set in motion to ensure there is active effort towards equal access to library programs, materials, services, and employment to those living with disability (American Library Association, 2006).

In 2002, the ACRL Personnel Administrators & Staff Development Officers Discussion Group published the *White Paper* focusing on "radical ideas and new approaches," (Ad Hoc Task Force on Recruitment & Retention Issues, 2002, pg. 6), for recruitment, retention, and

advancement within academic librarianship. However the paper strangely has little focus on explicit racial diversification of the workplace, or responding to the true longstanding issues. Nevertheless, the paper has some progressive thoughts and ideologies about the value of the Master's in Library and Information Science (MLIS) degree, and presents interesting solutions to diversify the workplace by finding ways to include applicants without one. This would affect the path towards professional, degree holding, librarianship in problematic ways and would assert that a degree would not be necessary to become a professional. Indeed, this would open professional-level positions to a larger pool of applicants, thereby increasing the diversity of applicants. However, professionalism, and more specifically deprofessionalism are complex issues and are beyond the scope of this paper.

At the 2004 ALA Conference, the Core Values of Librarianship were adopted (American Library Association, 2004). These core values have been in various documents including the *Freedom to Read* statement, the *Library Bill of Rights*, the *ALA Mission Statement*, *Libraries: an American Value,* and other documents but are, for the very first time, consolidated into one set of core values. Importantly, Diversity is asserted as 1 of the 11 core values stating:

> *"We value our nation's diversity and strive to reflect that diversity by*
>
> *providing a full spectrum of resources and services to the communities we*
>
> *serve. ALA Policy Manual 53.8 (Libraries: An American Value)"*
>
> -(American Library Association, 2004, pg. 2)

In 2007, an updated *White Paper* was published by the ACRL Board of Directors. The paper had much better explicit focus and clarity by stating and addressing the following:

"The current environment for the recruitment, retention, and advancement of

people of color in academic librarianship remains virtually unchanged

since the appearance of the 2002 White Paper"

-(ACRL Board of Directors Diversity Task Force, 2007, pg. 5)

The paper was significantly better at discussing workforce diversity, with an emphasis on strategies for achieving recruitment, retention, and advancement of groups traditionally underrepresented in the academic library workforce, or responding to the longstanding issues.

At the Midwinter Meeting in 2005, the Policy Monitoring Committee informally requested that the Committee on Diversity review Section 60, formally Minority Concerns, as portions of it have not been revised since 1986. The Committee on Diversity drafted a complete replacement for the current Section 60, and the Policy Monitoring Committee recommended that a set of updated policies be added to the Policy Manual, replacing the existing Section 60 (and its subsection), renaming the subsection "Diversity." (American Library Association, 2007). Importantly, the outdated policy of Minority Concerns can still be found in full on the ALA's website and in the 2007 Policy Manual that can be found online (American Library Association, 2006, 2007). Reading the outdated policy manual helps to provide greater proof of the historic commitment the ALA has made. By emphasizing priorities such as "cultural competency" and "anti-racism" (American Library Association, 2007, pg. 54), the ALA has prioritized modern notions of EDI work considerably early-on.

Diversity Counts (2007) was a comprehensive study of professional status, gender, race, and age in the library profession, originally conducted in 2006 and released in 2007. The study

echoes conclusions made from previous diversity assessments concluding 16.8% of

non-credentialed librarians selected non-white race/ethnicity categories, whereas only 11% of

credentialed librarians did so (American Library Association, 2007). Lastly, in 2008, the ALA

began more critically publicizing its commitment to EDI work on its website. A number of

webpages saw official publication in 2008 including *Programming to Promote Diversity*,

Diversity in the Workplace, *Diversity Research and Statistics*, *Workforce Development*, and

Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (American Library Association, 2008). All of these pages assert

the ALA's position and intention regarding these issues, a brief history of their work so far, and

resources to learn more. While the pages have seen obvious revision, the ALA's publication of

these pages at this time was momentous.

ALA EDI 2010's and the Notion of "Equity, Diversity and Inclusivity" Together:

The 2010s proved to be a momentous time for the notion of equity, diversity, and

inclusivity work. Throughout this era, the concepts are often paired together and stressed as a

kind of social justice work. Importantly, it is this era where the modern notions of these concepts

are identified and developed. No longer are initiatives and work *representing* EDI work, it is EDI

work.

Backtracking briefly, in 1998 the ALA Council voted commitment to Five Key Action

Areas as guiding principles for directing the Association's energies and resources. With the

development of a series of strategic plans, beginning with ALA Goal 2000 and continuing with

ALAction2005, ALA Ahead to 2010, and ALA 2015, these principles have expanded to the

current eight Key Action Areas, which are included in the Association's new Strategic Plan:

2017 Update, which was initially adopted in June 2015, and updated in January 2017 with the

addition of a 4th Strategic Direction: Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion based on the ALA

Committee on Divesity's recommendation (American Library Association, 2008, 2019). A full

summary of the new Strategic Direction better contextualizes the decision to add this Strategic

Direction (American Library Association, 2017).

The notable new Key Action Areas influencing this Strategic Direction being Diversity

and Equitable Access to Information and Library Services (ALA, 2017). Importantly as well, the

3rd Strategic Direction of Professional and Leadership Development was revised and describes

part of its purpose to "[I]ncrease diversity and inclusion within the field," (American Library

Association, 2019, pg. 6), offering a set of goals and strategies to achieve this.

Goal setting, EDI related strategic planning, and recommendation appeared to be a trend

in the 2010's. In 2011, the ALA published the *Recruiting for Diversity* webpage listing a set of

more equitable Strategies for the Recruitment and Application Process including to "create a

clear statement of the opportunity for both internal and external use," "advertise to diverse

constituents", and "ensure all portions of the application process are accessible" (American

Library Association, 2011). These strategies come as a response to the Diversity *Counts* (2007)

report, later updated in 2012 sharing similar statistics, demonstrating the longstanding issues

(American Library Association, 2007).

Interestingly, at the Midwinter Meeting of 2010, the council approved revision of Policy

50.2, Equal Rights Amendment Legislation. The policy received a few omissions, but was

completely renamed to 50.2, Equality for Women. States the ALA:

"This policy was written at the time the Equal Rights Amendment to the U.S. Constitution was being considered. Although most of the policy concerns equal rights for women, and thus remains relevant, the Equal Rights Amendment is no longer being considered. Because of this, and because the existing caption may mislead readers to believe that the content of the entire policy is obsolete."

-(American Library Association, 2010, pg 6)

This decision is confusing, particularly within the context and history of policy B.4 Equity and Access (Old Number 50), previously National Information Services and Responsibilities (American Library Association, 2007). The current 50.2 policy was renamed "Equal Rights Amendment" under section B.4/50, Equity and Access. This revision likely took place between 2012-2013 (American Library Association, 2013).

In 2012, the ACRL published a set of Diversity Standards to foster cultural competency for academic libraries. A set of 11 standards including cultural awareness of self and others, language diversity, and workforce diversity were put into place by the Ethnic Diversity Committee after many years of research including 2007's *White Papers (*American Library Association, 2012).

Before moving forward with programs, actions, or recommendations, the members of the Task Force on Equity, Diversity & Inclusion believed it was important to first define what we mean by equity, diversity, and inclusion, and to solicit feedback on those definitions from the library community. To aid with information gathering, they launched a series of short ALA member surveys to understand the culture of the association, the profession, and our

communities with respect to equity, diversity and inclusion (American Library Association, 2015). This process should be considered the first development of a shared language.

Continuing in 2016, the ALA published the Libraries Respond page, encouraging libraries to use the #librariesrespond when commenting publicly about social justice related issues (American Library Association, 2016). Additionally shared on the web page is a link to all ALA endorsed EDI statements – on the web page currently, 21 different EDI related statements (American Library Association, 2020).

Lastly, a series of unofficial statements publicizes the ALA's position on various issues including *Black Lives Matter*, *Combating Xenophobia and Fake News in Light of COVID-19*, *Cyber-bullying and Doxxing*, *Drag Queen Story Hour*, *Immigrants, Refugees and Asylum Seekers*, *National Day of Racial Healing*, and *Protecting and Supporting Transgender Staff and Patrons*. Archived response topics include the *2016 Election*, *Dakota Access Pipeline (#NODOPL)*, *Hate Crimes and Libraries, Hate Groups and Violence*, *Natural Disasters, Library Services to the Incinerated and Detained, Services to LGQBTQ+ People*, and *Services to Older Adults, and Services to Poor and Homeless People* (American Library Association, 2020). Frustratingly, these statements are contextualized as "resources are provided for informational purposes only; they do not constitute an endorsement or an approval by the ALA" (ALA, 2016). Statements and responses seem to have paused in 2020.

From 2016-2019, a set of 3 (and 1 final) reports on *EDI Recommendations* was presented to the ALA Board (American Library Association, 2008). In June 2016, the ALA Task Force Completed their *Final Report* (American Library Association, 2016). Additionally, in 2017, the Public Library Association (PLA), formed the PLA EDI Task Force which has been spearheading a number of initiatives towards workplace and library equity. This work can be

seen in their PLA EDI Newsletter as well as several columns in Public Libraries Magazine (American Library Association, 2017).

Importantly, it is this decade ALA policies, goals, and strategies have explicit reference to modern conceptions, notions, and definitions of "equity, diversity, and inclusivity." In 2017, "Equity, Diversity, and Inclusivity" was added as an Interpretation of the Library Bill of Rights with a set of definitions for all 3 terms (American Library Association, 2017, 2018). Interpretations have been listed online since 2007 (American Library Association, 2007). The interpretation is elaborated further:

> *"Libraries are essential to democracy and self-government, to personal development and social progress, and to every individual's inalienable right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. To that end, libraries and library workers should embrace equity, diversity, and inclusion in everything that they do"*
>
> -(American Library Association, 2017)

Additionally in 2017, the ALA Office for Diversity, Literacy and Outreach Services (ODLOS) developed a glossary of terms. This particular document is very important and its purpose is stated so clearly.

> *"This glossary is not intended to be an exhaustive list of every word and term used in our conversations about equity, diversity, and inclusion. The intent is to provide guidance and open discussion in the spirit of creating a more*

equitable, diverse, and inclusive society. Language can both contribute to

oppression and be a tool of liberation. In recognition of the way language

works, especially around these concepts, many of the words and terms will

continue to evolve."

-(American Library Association, 2017)

The practice and assertion that "language can both contribute to oppression and be a tool of liberation" (American Library Association, 2017), is an important one. Indeed, it is shared in the most up-to-date policy manual (American Library Association, 2010) and a similar sentiment is shared in *How to be an Anti-Racist* (2019), it is important to define and align terms to ensure there is a consistent language being used, therefore allowing for consistent goals (Kendi, 2019). Therefore, consistent language is important to ensure best execution of the goals of increased workplace diversity (and recruiting and retaining diverse hires), and a more equitable and inclusive information environment. Shared Kendi, "The only way to undo racism is to consistently identify and describe it – and then dismantle it," (Kendi, 2019, pg. 9).

Importantly, at the 2017 ALA Annual Conference, the ALA Council voted to add the definitions of Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion developed by the Task Force into the *ALA Policy Manual* as well as audit all definitions of equity, diversity, and inclusion across the association to ensure the broadest possible understanding; and explore core values and roles and responsibilities statements to assess equity, diversity, and inclusion (American Library Association, 2018). Since the initial survey efforts in 2014-2015, it is clear these definitions have taken a significant amount of time and represent the best and most professional shared language.

In 2019. the ALA Council ADOPTED, Resolution to Honor African Americans Who Fought Library Segregation, ALA CD#41_62118_ACT which read: "Resolved, That the American Library Association, on behalf of its members:

1. *"Acknowledges the fundamental injustice, cruelty, and inhumanity of racially segregated libraries*

2. *Apologizes to African Americans for wrongs committed against them in segregated public libraries*

3. *Commends African Americans who risked their lives to integrate public libraries for their bravery and courage in challenging segregation in public libraries and in forcing public libraries to live up to the rhetoric of their ideals*

4. *Welcomes all African Americans to libraries, recognizing in particular those who were forced to use segregated libraries*

5. *Encourages libraries to defend, in their policies and in their actions, the ALA Code of Ethics principle 1 – "We provide the highest level of service to all library users through appropriate and usefully organized resources; equitable access; and accurate, unbiased, and courteous responses to all requests"*

6. *Will review policy documents and internal procedures to ensure Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) principles are reflected throughout; and be it further resolved that this resolution be printed in full in American Libraries and publicized widely via all media channels."*

- (American Library Association, 2019, pg. 1-2)

Additionally, 2019 ALA President Loida Garcia-Febo and her Diversity Advisory Board, produced an EDI video series giving visibility to a diverse representation of library workers, champions, and patrons to help deepen the understanding of the principles of equity, diversity, and inclusion in action in our nation's libraries. Each video is "anchored" by three core questions:

1. *"How does equity, diversity, and inclusion factor into your daily life as a librarian?*
1. *What's the single biggest challenge facing libraries when it comes to equity, diversity, and inclusion?*
2. *What are some effective ways that libraries can promote equity, diversity, and inclusion in our communities?"*

-(American Library Association, 2019)

ALA EDI 2020-Present:

The 2020's continues the trend of explicit EDI strategic planning with more active efforts beyond statements. For example, the ALA now offers EDIcon, their official "flagship" program focusing on the foundations of Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (American Library Association, 2020). The trainings are designed to be flexible and fit various either in-service day conferences and/or official library trainings. *EDI Elements: Cultural Competence, Implicit Bias, Microaggression*s covers cultural competence, facilitating conversations about race, facilitating critical conversations, identifying microaggressions, implicit bias, and uncovering privilege and

addressing microaggressions in either a series or individual training (American Library Association, 2020). The number of public libraries who have participated in some variation of EDIcon is unknown. A more public display of impacted libraries would help increase the awareness, popularity, and effectiveness of this program.

In one exercise of EDIcon, the library or individual participating is asked to map their cultural orientation (American Library Association, 2020). A series of cultural competency related concepts such as rule importance, individualistic vs. collectivistic thinking, egalitarian vs. hierarchical thinking, surfacing differences vs. maintaining harmony, being vs. doing, and the individual or library asked to state where they are on each concept's scale. The exercise is designed to stimulate conversation and push the individual/library into exploring their biases.

In 2020, the PLA published their *Statement and Call to Action for Public Library Workers to Address Racism*. The statement contains a statement condemning systematic racism and violence against Black, Indigenous and People of Color (BIPOC). Additionally, there is an explicit call to action with a set of "action steps" including:

1. Study, amplify, and align with the policy demands of the Movement for Black Lives
2. Change library policies that punish and criminalize patron behavior, evaluate the messages about police and policing libraries promote to children and families in programs and collections
3. Create a plan of action for addressing racism and working toward collective liberation, address structural racism, work with BIPOC communities to identify and implement structural changes that must occur

within libraries, develop and fund (diverse and inclusive) programs, services, and collections,

4. Materially support organizations that provide resources and build community for BIPOC working in libraries

-(American Library Association, 2020)

The PLA and PLA Task Force on EDI and Social Justice vowed to track the progress and support libraries in these "action steps." It is encouraged for libraries to use this statement as associational support for EDI-related decision making.

In 2021, the ALA formally published a page regarding the concept of land acknowledgments after sharing an Intersections blog post acknowledging the land the Xwi7xwa Library sits on (American Library Association, 2020, 2021). This kind of recognition is a relatively new concept in regards to the history of social justice work. Going backwards for a moment, the ALA appeared to have shared their first land acknowledgment in 2017 acknowledging the indigenous history of the Denver region and Colorado more broadly and recognizing the Southern Ute Indian Tribe and Ute Mountain Ute Tribe (American Library Association, 2017).

The ALA also acknowledges the indigenous history of New Orleans, and more broadly, Louisiana, and recognizes the Chitimacha Tribe of Louisiana, the Coushatta Tribe of Louisiana, the Jena Band of Choctaw Indians, and the Tunica-Biloxi Indian Tribe of Louisiana. The ALA also acknowledged he state-recognized tribes of Louisiana, which include the Addai Caddo Tribe, the Biloxi-Chitimacha Confederation of Muskogee, Choctaw-Apache Community of Ebarb, Clifton Choctaw, Four Winds Tribe Louisiana Cherokee Confederacy, Grand

Caillou/Dulac Band, Isle de Jean Charles Band, Louisiana Choctaw Tribe, Pointe-Au-Chien

Indian Tribe, and the United Houma Nation (American Library Association, 2018).

In 2021, the American Library Association (ALA) adopted a new ninth principle on

racial and social justice to its *Code of Ethics*. According to ALA:

> *"We affirm the inherent dignity and rights of every person. We work to*
>
> *recognize and dismantle systemic and individual biases; to confront*
>
> *inequity and oppression; to enhance diversity and inclusion; and to*
>
> *advance racial and social justice in our libraries, communities,*
>
> *profession, and associations through awareness, advocacy, education,*
>
> *collaboration, services, and allocation of resources and spaces."*
>
> -(American Library Association, 2021)

Additionally in 2021, PLA published a diversity report admitting to certain EDI related

trends. PLA fielded the Public Library Staff and Diversity Survey in Fall/Winter 2021.

Longstanding trends within staff hiring and retention are concluded. It is concluded that most full

time/part time staff are white and/or female (Public Library Association, 2021). Particularly

illuminating is that the majority of surveyed libraries work to "foster an inclusive workplace

culture," and work to "dismantle systematic racism" but a minority actually have a "formal

mentorship program for new hires or action plans for retaining employees from underrepresented

groups" (Public Library Association, 2021, pg. 10). Additionally, the report is helpful because it

measures and compares the popularity of a set of common goals EDI goals and EDI activities.

Lastly, the glossary of terms at the end is helpful. The report is certainly the first of its kind by addressing explicit EDI themes, content, goals within the field of librarianship.

At the January 2022 Virtual Council Meeting, a few decisions regarding EDI work were made. Specifically, ALA Committee on Diversity accepted to use DEI Scorecard as a primary means for ALA's measures for DEI particularly the following:

1. *"Culture and Climate of the Organization*
2. *Training and Education*
3. *Recruitment, Hiring, Retention, and Promotion*
4. *Budget Priorities for DEI*
5. *Data Practices"*

-(American Library Association, 2022)

In August of 2022, the PLA/ACRL published *Cultural Proficiencies for Racial Equity: A Framework.* Rather than simply assert the existence of a diversity gap, this report does so but suggests practical solutions to "close the gaps" (Ghalioungui, 2022, pg. 9). For example, an emphasis on cultural competency and educating one-self is stressed as an important practice to understand the longstanding issues of how white supremacy, white privilege and racism show up in, especially in library settings. The value of accountability in racial equity work is asserted along with an emphasis on the value of assessment (and self-assessment) to ensure inward and outward EDI goals are being met. Building cross-sector cultural proficiency and influencing/affecting change in other professional, civic, political spheres is also addressed. Lastly, the concept of anti-racist leadership is touched on.

Frustratingly, although this document is highly prolific and momentous, the report offers little in terms of legitimate equity assessment protocols asserting:

"Libraries, their workers, and the communities that they serve are all unique, as are their needs. It is for this reason that there is not a singular plan or path that all libraries and library workers can use for assessment and accountability. Each individual, organization, and library must do the work to map out how assessment and accountability works best in their contexts. While there is no singular path forward, there are components each individual and organization should consider in order to implement change"

-(American Library Association, 2022, pg. 6)

The report does, however, recommend the previously discussed *DEI Scorecard for Library and Information Organizations* (2021)*,* developed by the ALA Committee on Diversity. Again, it is an evaluative tool that centers accountability and transparency in determining organizational effectiveness in diversity, equity, and inclusion in the recruitment, hiring, retention, and promotion of people of color. Additionally, the Scorecard includes areas that impact these factors such as training, budgeting, and data practices.

As per the ALA:

"The *Scorecard* is designed to help administrators of information organizations assess their current practices in five core areas to produce actionable data for decision making and enacting a robust and sustainable

commitment to equity, diversity, inclusion, and justice. The *Scorecard* is in

alignment with *ALA's Core Values of Librarianship* (2019) and ACRL's

commitment to diversity as outlined in *Diversity Standards: Cultural*

Competency for Academic Libraries (2012)"

-(ALA, 2021, pg. 1)

The 2020's has presented public libraries and academics with the tools, resources, and

support needed to explore EDI solutions. But, years of historical commitment and progress

should not be discredited. Lastly, it should be noted that this history is by no means a complete

history. The entirety of the ALA's commitment to EDI would be beyond the scope of this paper.

However, hopefully, this brief history of important events proves and attests to this commitment.

The Work of Progressive IL Libraries: EDI Consultation/Intervention:

For almost 150 years, the ALA has proven itself to be democratic, but also progressive,

and has over time become an institution that promotes the modern notions of equity, diversity,

inclusivity, social justice, and anti-racism. The previous section contextualized the ALA's

progressive history as one that *represents* a longstanding EDI journey with modern notions on

conceptions evolving over time. However, it is frustrating to see that the longstanding issues of

workplace and service diversification, whiteness, and sexism still plague the field. Since 1960

most predominantly, libraries have been "falling short" (Foy, 2021, p. 684), of *the same* sets of

diversification goals, despite efforts. However, an interesting trend within a specific subset IL

public libraries in progressive communities may prove to be the first explicit examples of the

ALA's revised EDI focused policies, goals, and strategies in practice. The 2010's trend of

publicized EDI work in the form of EDI statements and responses by the ALA has provided the foundational and associational support public and academic libraries need to make these kinds of statements on their own.

For many progressive public libraries, associational support along with EDI intervention has empowered libraries to produce their own EDI statements, land acknowledgement statements, and direct changes to strategic plans. A subset of IL public libraries have shared similar journeys. The goal of this section is to document and contextualize the work and progress of these progressive IL libraries and provide a snapshot of the current public library EDI landscape. The importance of assessment/evaluation will be addressed to determine the effectiveness of each EDI initiative's ability to "close the gaps" (Ghalioungui, 2022, pg. 9), and address the longstanding issues.

Throughout 2017-2023, a number of IL public libraries have participated in explicit EDI intervention. Interestingly, these IL libraries did not opt to receive official consultation from ALA's EDIcon but instead sought private intervention from consultants that may or may not have essential library-centric experience. For example, the Aurora Public Library District, Downers Grove Public Library, Glen Ellyn Public Library, and the Oak Park Public Library all consulted the expertise of The Blackberry Collection formally, Rasheeda Graham Washington (RGW) Consulting, LLC, "a boutique consulting firm that curates opportunities for its clients to reimagine and generate wonder in a way that leads to diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) for all (Glen Ellyn Public Library, 2021). This can be seen on the organization's "Growing list of clients" (Blackberry Collection, 2023). At the time of most of these library's intervention, the organization was named RGW Consulting. Interestingly, the Evanston Public Library sought private consultation from DeEtta Jones and Associates (DJA) (Evanston Public Library, 2018).

Frustratingly, it is difficult to locate primary resources describing RGW's content and learning goals. DJA has a considerably more fleshed out catalog of courses with client reviews which can be used to measure their success (DeEtta Jones and Associates, 2023). However, current information about RGW intervention/consultation specifics (aside from a series of YouTube videos) comes in the form of explicit curated reports and/or assessments.

For example, in April of 2021, the Downers Grove Public Library published its RGW Discovery Report:

> *"RGW Consulting (RGW) spent the week of September 21, 2020 interviewing and listening to a cross section of over 60 Downers Grove Public Library (DGPL) stakeholders including DGPL executive leadership team members, board members, department directors, and community members, as well as stakeholders who represent particular affinity group members based on gender, race, sexual orientation, age, ability, and interests/passions, to illuminate some of the root causes that impact the library's culture and climate, specifically as it pertains to practices related to diversity, equity, and inclusion. The discovery process illuminated strengths, challenges, and the need for stakeholders to continue to engage the interrogation of inequitable practices and how those practices show up systemically in DGPL culture."*
>
> -(Downers Grove Public Library, 2021, pg. 8)

The document outlines strengths and challenges that were revealed during the discovery process. Additionally, the document lays out a recommended course of action to address inequitable culture, behaviors, processes, and protocols within DGPL including to develop an Equity Advisory Team, plan DEI Strategic Development, Develop a DEI Programming Track, among others.

The Glen Ellyn Public Library produced a similar (and more concise) document echoing almost exactly the same strengths, challenges, and recommended next steps/action items (Glen Ellyn Public Library. Among the similarities are the identified challenges of pushback from the community and whiteness. Additionally, so are some of the recommended next steps such as to start an Equity Advisory Team (Glen Ellyn Public Library, 2021). The Oak Park Public Library also produced a similar document sharing almost the exact same items with a notable difference to form an "Anti-Racism Advisory Committee" and an "Anti-Racism Strategic Plan" (Oak Park Public Library, 2020, pg. 7). Information about Aurora Public Library District's progress with RGW Consultants is currently difficult to locate.

Consultations/interventions (in determining strengths, weaknesses, and a plan of action) can also be thought of as a kind of assessment or evaluation for the library itself. Evanston Public Library, seeking consultation from DJA, received its report in the form of an EDI needs assessment. Unlike other reports, this assessment U.S Census Bureau data to demonstrate Evanston's changing racial and ethnic demographics (Evanston Public Library 2018). This practice better legitimizes the need for the intervention and ultimately indicates a more thorough consultation. The assessment also better contextualizes this library's set of recommended actionable items.

Measuring the Success of EDI Intervention/Consultation and Following Through:

Again, the measurable value (outside of explicit surveying and attendance) of these interventions is difficult. This is due to the fact that intervention contents and/or syllabi are non-existent online along with the fact that there is no standardized content analysis measurement instrument. Additionally, this is due to the fact that there is very little discourse about EDI consultations within library literature. DJA was mentioned providing York University Libraries (YUL) with an organizational assessment report, ideas for a potential strategy framework, and a toolkit that included adaptable implementation templates (Leong, 2023), but that appears to be the only written occurrence within academic library discourse.

Among the available EDI consultation groups discussed so far, EDIcon and DJA appear to have the most thorough curricula and discourse. Nevertheless, it is important to recognize that most participating libraries have followed through with their action items which can also be used to assert the success of the interventions. For now, the effectiveness of EDI consultation groups (particularly the RGW/Blackberry Collection) can be determined by reviewing documentation produced by participating libraries after intention and assessing their accordance with the library's recommended action items. This comes in the form of various written updates and board meeting minutes.

Following Through: Separate EDI Strategic Planning:

All 3 libraries listed EDI strategic planning as an action item (Downers Grove Public Library, 2021; Oak Park Public Library 2020; Glen Ellyn Public Library, 2021). Oak Park Public Library developed a separate *Anti-Racism Strategic Plan* separate from its parent Strategic Plan to provide a unique focus on the Strategic Priority of Anti-Racism (Oak Park Public Library,

2022). Similarly, the Downers Grove Public library developed its *Equity Strategic Plan* following the RGW intervention with notable goals such as to demonstrate that, as a public library, DGPL advocates for and welcomes all Historically, Intentionally, Traditionally, Marginalized Peoples or Groups (HITMPGs) for Downers Grove, the Midwest region, and the library profession in the expansion of EDI practices (Downers Grove Public Library, 2022).

Indeed, there are many advantages to developing a stand-alone EDI strategic plan instead of "simply incorporating diversity into a general strategic plan" (Edwards, 2015, pg. 1), including providing a unique focus on the issue of library-centric EDI. However, there is a mixed feeling associating such planning as truly "separate" from the traditional strategic plan. It is by nature a complex issue and perhaps incorporating a separate, EDI strategic plan is best. However, the contents of a library's EDI strategic plan should remain in both verbatim to eliminate confusion. Nevertheless, EDI strategic focused planning is endorsed by the ALA, PLA, and ILA and by the library boards of all the previously mentioned progressive IL libraries.

Following Through: Creating an EDI-Centered Committee and Excipit EDI Directors:

Another recommended shared item was to create a specific EDI-centered committee. Oak Park Public Library has committed to the creation of an Anti-Racism Advisory Committee (Oak Park Public Library, 2021). This kind of committee is the first of its kind and includes a collection of full time and part time staff, board members, and community members that work together to address inequities within the library and community. The groups do not have the power to actively change policy, but do serve as a way to efficiently pool together ideas and develop EDI-centered proposals to the library board.

However, special recognition should be given to the Oak Park Public Library for creating

and filling the position of Director of Equity & Anti-Racism (Oak Park Public Library, 2023),

putting a unique internal focus on this kind of work. Indeed, one of the quintessential issues of

suggesting this kind of work should be handled by a committee is the fact that this kind of work

is now associated as "extra" or "separate from" the formal responsibilities laid out in the library

worker's job description. By having a dedicated, full time Director of Equity & Anti-Racism, the

library is better prepared to internally address library related EDI concerns with greater and more

legitimate focus serving the diverse Oak Park community, or the "People's Republic of Oak

Park." A problematic but important term describing a community that is both progressive and

integrated (Grant, 2023).

Following Through: Anti-Hate Statements:

Picking up where the ALA left off in 2020, the progressive IL libraries in question have

all created a series of EDI anti-hate statements. Some of these statements are a result of EDI

intervention and can be used as a measurable outcome. The priority of EDI is seen in many

important documents and statements published by the ALA previously discussed such as the

Code of Ethics, ALA Policy Manual, and Library Bill of Rights. Importantly, the Illinois Library

Association (ILA) have also demonstrated a need for its own EDI statement with the purpose

being:

> *"To serve as a foundational document that will guide ILA activities and*
>
> *policies, including, but not limited to, the association's nominations,*
>
> *awards, and committee appointments.*

To demonstrate a public commitment to principles that the association can

refer to when called to address future current events and as the

environment continually evolves.

To establish a common vocabulary as an association and identify the

populations within Illinois librarianship we intend to serve via our

DEI-related activities."

-(Illinois Library Association, 2021)

This statement provides further associational support for public libraries to issue statements of their own. For example, Oak Park Public Library issued an explicit equity and anti-racism statement which reads:

"The Oak Park Public Library values all people. It works to offer welcoming

spaces, a sense of belonging, and positive experiences for everyone, and

especially for historically, intentionally, and traditionally marginalized

people groups. It is intended as a safe space and a community hub for all.

This statement commits the library to being an organization that helps to

dismantle systems of oppression that have created, and that perpetuate

internal and external racist conditions. It commits the library to being

equitable and anti-racist in everything it does.

The Oak Park community and the library profession have aspired for years to

embody the values of diversity, equity, and inclusion. This is a journey and

a journey that is imperfect. The library must continue that journey, to

improve, and to do better. The library invites the people of the Oak Park

community to join us on that journey.

To provide space for and to elevate the voices of historically, intentionally,

and traditionally marginalized people groups, the library must be actively

anti-racist, in both its internal and external practices.

Choosing to be anti-racist touches everything the library does. The priorities

of equity and anti-racism drive all of the library's work, including its

mission and vision and the allocation of its resources. On an ongoing

basis, the library must identify and address how its policies, systems,

budgets, programs, and services may be inequitable and serve to

marginalize or oppress people. Then it must work to change them.

The library recognizes that progress along this journey is not necessarily

linear and requires constant attention and investment. Being an anti-racist

organization is an ever-evolving journey."

-(Oak Park Public Library, 2021)

This particular statement asserts the library's commitment to EDI, much like the ALA

has. The statement so importantly echoes the nonlinearity of this kind of work; it is a journey

with no means to an end and imperfect. It is an eloquently written promise. In Evanston Public Library's Commitment to Racial Equity statement the library apologizes for years of underrepresentation and being "neutral rather than equitable" (Evanston Public Library. 2020. pg. 2).

However, not all of these statements are necessarily a call to action. Some anti-hate statements are a response to current issues. For example, the Downers Grove Public Library issued a statement in response to the horrific act of senseless violence and bigotry that took the lives of five individuals and injured about two dozen others in Colorado Springs' LGBTQ+ nightclub, Club Q. The Downers Grove Public Library reaffirmed its commitment to standing in solidarity with the LGBTQ+ community (Downers Grove Public Library, 2022).

In defense of these kinds of statements, Downers Grove Public Library's Cindy Khatri and Van McGary state in an article from Library Journal:

> *"Releasing anti-hate statements serves three primary purposes for DGPL. The first and foremost is to show support for HITMPGs in crisis. An anti-hate statement establishes that not only are they safe, but they are welcome at the library. Anti-hate statements also communicate that hate has no home in the library; the kind of behavior that prompted the library to issue a statement will not be tolerated within the building. Finally, statements model behavior that we would like to see. By issuing a statement, the library is acting as a catalyst for positive change and opening a door for other institutions, organizations, and individuals to join in denouncing the hateful actions."*
>
> -(Khatri, Cindy; McGary, Van, 2022)

Khatri and McGary demonstrate the need for focused equity and anti-racism statements as well as statements in response to current events. They utilize the previously referenced PLA *Call to Action* (2020) and the 9th principal on racial and social justice in the updated *Code of Ethics* (2021) as proof of associational support to validate their creation. Their perspectives and statement instruction serve as a framework for other public libraries seeking to make their own anti-hate statements. Indeed, the ILA issued its anti-hate statement in May of 2021 constituting an even greater association support for IL public libraries to do the same (Illinois Library Association, 2021).

The Downers Grove Public Library issued an official release outlining why the library chooses to release anti-hate statements. The statement (unsurprisingly) echoes almost exactly the same sentiments as the Library Journal article. However, the fact that the public library themselves issued such a statement should be emphasized. In describing in what situations the library should respond with an anti-hate statement it states, "Anti-hate statements should be released any time a HITMPG or community group is experiencing a need for support against hate and violence on a public and large platform" (Downers Grove Public Library, 2021, pg. 1).

Anti-hate statements are certainly a demonstration of a public library's commitment to EDI and are supported by the ALA, PLA, and ILA. However, they read more as promises and are arguably an ineffective means to legitimately "close the gaps" (Ghalioungui, 2022, pg. 9). Nevertheless, they do establish comfortability and help to reiterate that the library is a safe space for everyone.

Following Through: Land Acknowledgments:

Land acknowledgments have presented themselves to be an increasingly popular demonstration of a library's commitment to EDI. Although the ALA has little to add to the

conversation, Downers Grove Public Library's Cindy Khatri and Van McGary state in an article published by the ILA:

> *"In countries such as Canada, Australia, and New Zealand, it is commonplace, even policy, to open gatherings and events by acknowledging the traditional Indigenous inhabitants of that land. In recent years, in the United States, including Illinois, institutions such as public and academic libraries have started creating land acknowledgments as efforts focusing on equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) have grown. Through this lens, organizations and individuals have developed recognition of the importance of raising awareness of the truthful history of the land they use and the land's original Indigenous inhabitants."*
>
> -(Khatri, Cindy; McGary, Van, 2022)

Consequently, the Downers Grove Public Library issued its land acknowledgment in August of 2021 (Downers Grove Public Library, 2021). Glen Ellyn Public Library issued its "*Beyond the Land Acknowledgment*" statement in June of 2022 stressing that while Land Acknowledgments can be a source of written affirmation and inclusion, they can also be perceived as negative when non-Natives acknowledge, noting "If a land acknowledgement is done without any input or collaboration from the Native community or if that input is ignored, it can be a way to continue segregation lines" (Vaughn, 2022).

In a similar vein to anti-hate statements, land acknowledgments can read a promise that establishes comfortability, but fail to to legitimately "close the gaps" (Ghalioungui, 2022, pg. 9) and mitigate the longstanding issues. Nevertheless, the practice is a demonstration of a library's commitmentment to EDI. Greater associational support and example from the ALA, PLA, and ILA may help to improve the messages delivered within land acknowledgments.

Following Through: Revised Full-Scale Strategic Planning:

After possible intervention/consultation, public libraries are not entirely on their own to address inequities and racism. As demonstrated, there is a considerable amount of associational and institutional support from the ALA, PLA, and ILA. These organizations have all continued to explicitly shift their priorities and philosophies within their strategic plan to address EDI. The purpose of this brief section is to demonstrate the ways in which priorities have shifted and how they have trickled down and manifested at the local library level particularly in an institution/library's strategic planning - specifically within mission and vision statements.

For example, Oak Park Public Library's revised mission and vision statement feels like a result of successful intervention and acknowledgment of the associational support:

> *"As a public library in a Book Sanctuary Community, we value democracy and intellectual freedom and encourage everyone to read diverse and inclusive books.*

> **Vision:** *To empower every voice in our community.*

Mission: *We share the information, services, and opportunities that fulfill Oak*

 Park's aspirations.

Values: *Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion; Civic Responsibility, Collaboration,*

 Compassion, Gathering, and Participation; Access, Education,

 Knowledge, Intellectual Freedom, Literacy, Opportunity, and Privacy; and

 Accountability, Preservation, Sustainability, and Transparency.

These values were derived through a years-long process of turning outward

 and identifying shared community aspirations of literacy, education,

 diversity, inclusion, equity, empathy, health, safety, and affordability."

-(Oak Park Public Library, 2022)

The above mission and vision statements are reflective of effective intervention/consultation and mirror values and statements put in place by the ALA such as the EDI interpretation of the *Library Bill of Rights*. Of the discussed libraries, Oak Park Public Library and Evanston Public Library are the only to have made significant revision to their mission and vision statements to reflect an emphasis on EDI and anti-racism (Oak Park Public Library, 2022; Evanston Public Library, 2017).

It is important to look for EDI emphasis within a library's strategic plan, mission, and vision (Ghalioungui, 2022). Indeed, equity, diversity, and inclusivity (EDI) plans and initiatives are at the forefront of many library's strategic planning (Mallon, 2019). Briefly, "[A] mission statement is a statement of purpose, a vision statement is a vivid image of the future you seek to create, and a values statement outlines your organization's guiding concepts and beliefs," (Hirsh,

2022, pg. 259). These definitions for the mission, vision, and values statements are some of the most succinct and shared in library science (Allison & Kaye, 2015, pg. 77). Since strategic plans should be considered "living documents" that adhere and develop to the current climate a library resides in, in order to remain truly relevant (Hirsh, 2022, pg. 267), decisions to incorporate and emphasize EDI into them should be validated if it is an interest to the community.

The planning process and evaluation should include residents who may traditionally lack power, as well as those in a position to effect needed changes such as community leaders (Watson-Thompson et. al., 2008). By seeking private EDI and anti-racist intervention/consultation, the Aurora Public Library District, Evanston Public, Downers Grove Public Library, Glen Ellyn Public Library, and Oak Park Public Library have all succeeded in at least learning how to better determine the needs of HTMGPs respectfully.

For those libraries unable to seek consultation or are having difficulty, Chapter 18 of *Implementing Excellence in Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion: A Handbook for Academic Libraries* (2022), provides a truly useful plethora of audits, guidelines, and suggestions to ensure the language of the strategic plan is stable and consistent. Alternatively, public libraries can and should turn to the associational support of the ALA and PLA and utilize their EDI statements and definitions as a framework. It must be remembered that the libraries previously discussed have had fortunate community support and have had the unique opportunity to take action in such a full-scale and profound way.

Following Through: Action Through the Library Board:

Perhaps the most effective way to respond to the longstanding issue and "close the gaps" (Ghalioungui, 2022, pg. 9), is through actionable strategic planning and policy change that

addresses these suggestions and items in library board meetings. There is obvious support for explicit policy change demonstrated by the ALA, PLA, and ILA. Reviewing or monitoring a library's board meetings can be an effective way to "check-in" on the library's progress within the consultation's suggestions and overall EDI goals.

For example, Oak Park Public Library's February 2022 Virtual Board Meeting minutes (shortly following consultation/intervention) had a clear and direct actionable update. "Anti-Racism" is listed as a Strategic Priority (Oak Park Public Library, 2022, pg. 3) and was part of this meeting's agenda. The library expresses a desire to decrease the negative impact that an advanced library science degree (MLIS) requirement in job position postings has on opportunities for promotions and upward mobility for library staff, particularly staff HITMPGs stating:

> *"To help achieve this goal, our Anti-Racism Strategic Plan names the development of a Black mentorship initiative for internal staff and local students as a critical strategy. Thus, the library's Director of Equity & Anti-Racism Stephen Jackson has begun meeting with two faculty members at Dominican University's School of Information Studies — Dr. Anthony Dunbar and Dr. Sujin Wiggins — to discuss a partnership in developing such a mentorship program."*

-(Oak Park Public Library, 2022, pg. 14)

Following Through: Increasing Workplace Diversity:

Though not explicitly stated in the consultation reports, there is effort responding to the longstanding issue of workplace diversity (American Library Association 1968, 1986, 2007, 2016; Public Library Association, 2021). Indeed, diverse recruitment and retention without resorting to deprofessionalization or paraprofessionalization is a difficult challenge. Some paraprofessionalization is encouraged and helps to allow better efficiency and role-definition to more intensive library positions such as director or library marketer. Of course, lowering the cost of entry by eliminating the requirement of an MLIS degree would create a more equitable and inclusive application and hiring environment. It can be a way to diversify this environment by providing opportunities to a larger number of interested library workers. It would also lead to reduced salaries and the increased appointment of individuals with ties to those in power. But, special attention and care should be made to the language of these more equitable revisions.

For example, within the job descriptions of traditionally degree-requiring positions at the Downers Grove Public, experience and knowledge "*typically* acquired through completion of an MLIS program" (DGPL, 2022), is all that is required. These subtle shifts in language help to provide this opportunity to a larger group of people. Namely, those who cannot afford to or have comparable experience to library school, and potentially, HITMGPGs. Ultimately, that is the goal of these kinds of decisions, however there is difficulty and challenge completely ignoring the need for an MLIS degree in more intensive library roles. Library deprofessionalism is of course its own, but related issue. Sadly, an in depth analysis about the history of library deprofessionalism is also beyond the scope of this paper.

Following Through: Conclusions:

Listing every occurrence of a public library addressing and making progressive on an explicit EDI goal is beyond the scope of this paper. The point is reviewing (or attending) a library's board meeting is a critical way to receive the most up-to-date progress on a library's EDI journey. It is the most effective way to monitor if the library is following through with the actionable suggestions laid out by consultation/intervention and if the library is following through with its own EDI goals and priorities. In this sense, EDI consultation and intervention is highly effective as it provides a framework for evaluation and assessment. Greater emphasis should be placed on this kind of EDI initiative that is supported by the ALA, PLA, and ILA.

Measuring the effectiveness of these consultations/intervention through continued content analysis, assessment, review, and surveying is the only way to demonstrate their value especially in response to the longstanding issue. Particularly, if the intervention provided an effective framework to "close the gaps" (Ghalioungui, 2022, pg. 9). Frustratingly, there is little to offer in terms of this kind of discourse. Nevertheless, this practice, though modern, is certainly a product of the associational support the ALA, PLA, and Illinois Library Association (ILA) (Illinois Library Association, 2021) have committed to providing in countless formats.

What to Do After Consultation and Responsibility:

It should be noted these kinds of consultations/interventions temporarily place the "work" and critical reflection of the library on the consultation firm. The interventions are in many ways an extensive diversity assessment resulting in a collection of suggestions and actionable items the library *should* respond to. After consultation, the ownership is placed back onto the association, library, library worker and/or individual.

At the core, these interventions/consultations provide the individual or library a unique and structured opportunity to look inward and build upon their cultural competence. The ALA has emphasized the importance of cultural competence, but has reminds readers that the medical field has coined the term "cultural humility" to reflect an ongoing commitment to life-long learning, acknowledging and accepting our own limitations to cultural sensitivity, and recognizing power imbalances that exist in institutions and systems (American Library Association, 2022). Cultural humility provides a more welcoming opportunity to look inward and identify biases.

In Chapter 5, Mentoring and Diversity, of *Implementing Excellence in Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion: a Handbook for Academic Libraries* (2022), the authors stress the importance and effectiveness of creating a space of cultural humility, not cultural competence, as a framework to guide ongoing self-reflection by building mentor and mentee relationship. Effective mentoring can have a tremendous impact on whether a new employee feels welcomed and included and stays with the organization in the long term (Bartlett, 2013). This is concerning since a minority of public libraries have an interest in a "formal mentorship program for new hires or action plans for retaining employees from underrepresented groups" (Public Library Association, 2021, pg. 10). Ultimately, shifting the language away from EDI training, where participants are "right and wrong," to EDI mentorship, where participants can acknowledge their biases, seems more effective.

Clearly, effective EDI consultation/intervention can be effective by providing the library an action plan and informing the organization about the interstices of fostering cultural humility, especially for after consultation/intervention. The journey does not, and should not, stop after consultation/intervention. There are obviously a number of resources available that can inform

community members about the importance of cultural humility, but contextualizing this concept is difficult for many. This attests to the benefit of conducting EDI consultation/intervention who may be experts in this concept.

While not explicitly shared as a challenge facing public libraries by any particular EDI assessment per-se, it should be stressed that these consultants are not the public library directors, managers, or supervisors that are now placed in charge of attending to these recommended actions. Their experience as library professionals (with or without credentials) is unclear. Therefore, the experience and advice proposed should be taken with a grain of salt as it is not likely these consultants fully understand the complexities of managing a library.

It should be reiterated once more that these outputs are a product of EDI work in progressive public libraries. The reality is what is described may be less influential in conservative communities. The organization's "left-of-center" approach to public policy and standards can be seen as problematic for conservative communities (Influence Watch, n.d.). In fact, some libraries representing conservative communities, such as Montana State Library, have left the Association due to a misalignment with the ALA's "leftist, Marxist, lesiban" president, Emily Drabkinski (Arnold, 2023). Consequently, this work is a product of these specific progressive IL libraries embracing and acting on the ALA's support.

Challenges Facing EDI Work in Public Libraries:

It would be irresponsible not to touch on the plethora of issues that prevent public libraries to "close the gaps" (Ghalioungui, 2022, pg. 9), despite these nobel efforts. Library literature itself has repeatedly asserted difficulty and pushback when conducting social justice work (Foy, 2021; Ghalioungui, 2022; Crowley, 2023). The EDI consultations/interventions

discussed previously are helpful as their concrete outputs have produced a framework for public libraries to evaluate the effectiveness of their EDI journey in the form of suggestions and recommended actionable items. However, the EDI consulting/interventions also forced the participating libraries to look inward and identify for themselves the challenges plaguing their library striving for EDI.

The purpose of this section is to briefly identify some of the largest challenges that make direct appearances in a library's EDI assessment/evaluation. The second purpose is to provide some recommendations to remedy these challenges in ways not proposed by the assessment/evaluations. It should be noted that these are typically longstanding issues as a result of progressive librarianship ideals trying to advocate themselves in conservative communities. It should also be noted that the issues discussed are beyond the traditional longstating issues typically asserted in library literature such as diversity in the workplace, collections, and programming, as well as professionalization and deprofessionalization. These challenges are one step backward and represent *why* the traditional library-centric longstanding issues still exist. Of course, there are a plethora of challenges and issues and identifying every issue is beyond the scope of this paper.

Challenge: General Pushback from the Community:

For example, general pushback from the community is a large challenge in multiple EDI reports (Downers Grove Public Library, 2021; Glen Ellyn Public Library 2021). Community pushback is a very real challenge and concern. For example, in an effort to provide more curated programming to LGBTQIA+ identifying teens, the Downers Grove Public Library offered a Drag-Queen Bingo event that was unfortunately canceled due to a number of violent threats and

messages sent to the library including a gun bullet mailed to the library in a Confederate flag envelope (Downers Grove Public Library, 2022). It is the purpose of the library to provide for the needs of the community and this apparent disagreement between the community and library is frustrating. Lastly, this pushback can also pose a problem to a library trying to incorporate or emphasize EDI into its strategic planning.

Perhaps the best means to prepare for and respond to community pushback is to provide the community with information representing a majority community interest in the proposed EDI-centric collection update, programming, or statement. This would serve as proof that the proposed EDI-centric collection update, programming, or statement is a need of the community (Ghalioungui, 2022). However, most importantly, the need needs to feel like a genuine need of underrepresented groups and therefore requires the input of HTMPGs. Validating every EDI-centric initiative by means of survey is not necessarily feasible, but gathering community data, a few times a year, to probe community opinions about a library's EDI journey is.

Challenge: Creating a Shared Language:

Another challenge for many public libraries' EDI journey is creating a shared language (Downers Grove Public Library, 2021; Oak Park Public Library 2020; Glen Ellyn Public Library, 2021). Library and anti-racist literature both agree that creating a shared language is paramount to dismantle systemic and individual biases (American Library Association, 2021; Kendi 2019). Currently, of the previously discussed progressive IL libraries, Evanston Public Library is the only to explicitly define these terms in a statement and finalize its shared language (Evanston Public Library, 2023).

While the sentiments of these definitions are the same, Evanston Public Library's definitions are different from the ALA (American Library Association, 2017). The challenge of creating a shared language does not have to be one. While community-centric definitions developed by the library are useful, the goal of creating a shared language can be achieved quickly should public libraries adopt the definitions of equity, diversity, inclusion, racial justice, social justice, and systematic vs. individual bias, resourcefully put in place by the ALA / ODLOS (American Library Association, 2017). Public libraries and private EDI consultation/intervention firms are frustratingly forgetting the associational support provided by the ALA in this respect. Important to note, LGBTQIA+, HITMPG, and BIPOC tend to be in need of most frequent re-clarification. The ALA should consider the importance and efficiency of these terms and provide its own official definitions.

However, it should be noted that using ALA definitions can also be counter-productive. First, it ignores the reality that public libraries need to be community centered and need to use language acceptable to the community. Consequently, there are fair points both for and against the standardization of a shared language.

Challenge: Appropriation and Performative Allyship:

Appropriation and Performative Allyship is a complex challenge that infrequently appeared in the intervention summaries (Downers Grove Public Library, 2021). The concept of allyship in itself is something that should be more outwardly promoted as a learning goal. The Racial Equity Tool defines "Ally" as "someone who makes the commitment and effort to recognize their privilege (based on gender, class, race, sexual orientation, etc.) and work in solidarity with oppressed groups in the struggle for justice. Allies understand that it is in their

own interest to end all forms of oppression, even those from which they may benefit in concrete ways." (Racial Equity Tools).

The current (and historically standing) status quo of librarianship is that the majority of library workers are white (Public Library Association, 2021; American Library Association, 1986, 2007). Consequently, the majority of progressive library workers are going to be white identifying allies possibly seeking more fulfilling intervention or self-reflection. And, in a similar way to the negative notions of land acknowledgments, appropriated and performative allyship, or disingenuous allyship, is a concern. Indeed, there are many challenges and barriers towards becoming a *true* white ally (Sue, 2013). Receiving the opportunity to partake in self-reflection at expense of one's local library or association should not be taken for granted. As Sue suggests, the content of said intervention/consultation better contextualizes the external and internal challenges that it presents the individual, whiteness and white privilege, "walking the walk," and cultural competence/humility so that true white allyship can be understood and achieved (Sue, 2013).

Challenge: The Gap Between the "Ideal" vs. the "Real":

Perhaps the most existential challenge is the "gap between the ideal vs. the real" (Downers Grove Public Library, 2021; Oak Park Public Library, 2020). In ways, the appearance of this as a challenge legitimizes previous LIS literature and the inability to "close the gaps" (Foy, 2021; Ghalioungui, 2022, pg. 9). Ultimately, this challenge pertains to the general difficulty stakeholders have when trying to "commit to the kinds of commitments and sacrifices" (Downers Grove Public Library, 2021, pg. 14), required to achieve a truly equitable library. It is another manifestation of the battles between a progressive library in a conservative community.

Indeed, being a library "free of racism" or "-isms" is a difficult goal that has no means to an end. But, it is also a challenge that asserts that the issue is larger than the library itself. States the PLA so eloquently in summarizing *Cultural Proficiencies for Racial Equity: A Framework* (2022) :

> *"Although the LIS sector cannot, on its own, solve the problem of racism in society, it can acknowledge the role it has played in contributing to and sustaining systems of inequity and oppression of communities of color, and own the responsibility for countering its effects, both historically and today. And while we acknowledge the global impacts of racism, for the purposes of this framework, we will specifically address the impacts of racism in both the United States and Canada."*
>
> -(American Library Association, 2022)

The PLA acknowledges its limited role in combating racism in the US and Canada. However, this challenge calls into question the place a public library has in conducting social justice work. In issuing such statements, the reason why a library or association may invest in this kind of work is better understood. In March 2021, Downers Grove Public Library issued a statement answering this question stating:

> *"By working with a consultant on equity, diversity, and inclusion, we learn to use a different lens, a different way of seeing to help us find where we are falling short."*
>
> -(Downers Grove Public Library, 2021, pg. 1)

This echoes some of the previous conclusions about the importance and effectiveness of EDI intervention/consultation by asserting them as a means of assessment/evaluation. However, the statement continues wisly:

> *"The concept of the public library as the "great equalizer," the people's university, the last bastion of democracy may be true in spirit, but historically not in practice "Public libraries, like other institutions, traditionally and intentionally marginalized some people groups. By learning to view our community in all of its glorious diversity, we also learn to address the library needs of all of our community."*
>
> -(Downers Grove Public Library, 2021, pg. 1)

The solution to this challenge is a difficult one. Statements like the PLA's and Downers Grove Public Library's that admit to historical inequity can help the public understand why this kind of work is being done. Public libraries should use these uniquely focused statements to continue to answer the question of "why" in order to prove to the community and stakeholders that they are capable of closing the "gap between the ideal vs. the real" (Downers Grove Public Library, 2021; Oak Park Public Library, 2020).

However, public libraries, as well as EDI consultants need to be aware of why people ignore the facts. A noble effort to demonstrate and acknowledge the truth, such as a need for diversity, can produce the "backfire effect," causing people to double down and become even more stubborn in their beliefs. Indeed, research suggests that correcting misperceptions isn't

enough to change behavior. Psychology research provides a few ways to overcome these flaws in human reasoning, like making accuracy goals, being curious about the other side, or embracing complexity and nuance (Rathje, 2018).

Nevertheless, organizations should continue to use these kinds of statements to prove to the community and stakeholders of their awareness and limited place within EDI work. Ultimately, these statements and reflections will have the most impact after looking inward and after consultation/intervention and continue to tell and not show. However, it is an important part of the EDI journey.

Conclusions, Embracing Cultural Humility, and Moving Forward:

EDI work is by no means a means to an end. It is a journey that is specific to every organization, community, public library, and person. Increasing workplace diversity, recruiting and retaining diverse hires, performative allyship, providing inclusive and diverse programming and collections, etc., are all unique issues that will require specific attenuation, passion, and care to properly mitigate. However, embracing "cultural humility" and taking responsibility to educate and reinform oneself about these historic longstanding issues is incredibly noble and is an important first step.

All-staff, library-wide education by means of an effective EDI consultant group helps to provide a framework and a set of actionable items for which the public library to complete and evaluate its own progress on. These kinds of consultations can be effective for personal and individualistic growth as well but an individual's journey should not have to stop there. Personal growth can continue for library workers and should be provided by the library. It cannot be stressed enough, however, that the opportunity for the discussed IL libraries to do so comes

advantageously in representing progressive communities. The reality is this kind of work may be less influential in conservative communities.

Despite the expense of these kinds of interventions. Project Empathy is an incredibly thorough, free, open, online, and self-guided training for all library and museum works and can be an effective educational tool for the library worker feeling unsupported by their public library. The course covers many topics covered in a library-wide EDI consultation/intervention such as compassion fatigue, cultural humility, implicit bias, intent vs. impact, microaggressions, and power and privilege (Institute of Museum and Library Services, n.d.). Many of these topics are also shared by EDIcon. Project Empathy's effectiveness is significantly less documented. However, the zero-cost and open access approach to this program makes the education a lot more accessible and inclusive. If Project Empathy were proven effective for library-scale intervention and beyond personal growth, this is something other EDI intervention and consultation groups would need to think about.

Ultimately, continued EDI-focused public library assessments by means of intervention/consultation can be an effective way to "close the gaps" (Ghalioungui, 2022, pg. 9). These kinds of assessments are supported by the ALA, PLA, and ILA and continued association support from other states is encouraged. However, continued evaluation of these EDI interventions themselves is essential as well to determine which is most effective. This paper attested to the effectiveness of RGW/The Blackberry Collection and DJA. Continued documentation and review is essential for more in-depth discourse about these groups and EDIcon. Additionally, it must be stressed that despite this success, consultants that lack relevant experience managing libraries are inherently limited. They may provide fine examples but that does not substitute for real-world experience making hard decisions. Public library directors are

in a better position to advance EDI on a local basis instead of following an ALA or consultant script where the consultants lack considerable experience as a public library director Though, this does not mean public library director or manager may find these kinds of interventions useful. Lastly, what is needed is a greater understanding of when political realities require compromises and a mixed belief coalition for achieving aspects of the overall goal of progressive change (Crowley, 2023).

The ALA, PLA, and ILA have all historically combated racism, sexism, and are associations that have, over time, now explicitly advocate for equity, diversity, and inclusivity. The brief history previously discussed demonstrates the ALA's commitment to democratic and progressive ideology and hopefully, it becomes a resource for the future discourse of public library EDI and social justice work. Hopefully, it can serve as a citation for future researchers seeking to perform literature reviews of this important history. The ALA's EDI work of the 2010's and 2020's have undoubtedly trickled down to the local public library sector. Sharing the work of Aurora Public Library District, Downers Grove Public Library, Evanston Public Library, Glen Ellyn Public Library, and Oak Park Public Library helps to expand the currently developing history of library-centric EDI work and demonstrate the new found responsibility public libraries are attending to, as suggested by the PLA (American Library Association, 2020).

Public libraries and public librarians are responding to the call to action in various ways that read like promises in the form of revised mission and vision statements, equity and anti-racism strategic plans, anti-hate statements, land acknowledgments, and all sorts of responses. The development of these documents are certainly a product of associational support, intervention/consulting and looking inward and are a nobel recognition at the local public library level. Ultimately, the next step is taking explicit action to respond to the longstanding

library-centric issues of workplace diversity (and recruiting and retaining diverse hires) and creating a more equitable and inclusive information environment in ways that increase diverse community member use in compelling ways.

Special recognition should be given to Oak Park Public Library in creating and filling the position of Director of Equity & Anti-Racism (Oak Park Public Library, 2023), putting a unique internal focus on this kind of work. Additionally, all of the progressive IL libraries mentioned should be applauded for their decision to take the first uncomfortable step in their EDI journey, being some of the first to demonstrate what EDI work looks like at the local library level and to respond in such an active mindset. These libraries are leaders in the prevailing challenge of responding to America's politically mixed information needs. Indeed, maintaining neutrality and progressivity is difficult given nation's, state's, and communities' bureaucracy that, fortunately or unfortunately, must exist to reflect democracy and an information environment that reflects the needs of the community. Therefore, an opportunity for library-wide or individual EDI self-reflection should not be taken lightly.

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