

Exploring Cultural Competency in Academic Libraries

Eric R. Ely

University of Wisconsin – Madison, Madison, Wisconsin, USA

eely@wisc.edu

ABSTRACT

As institutions of higher education in the United States become increasingly diverse it is imperative that academic librarians demonstrate cultural competence to best serve all students. In this works in progress poster, I explore what cultural competency looks like in practice at academic libraries. Conceptualizing cultural competency as a spectrum, and as abilities one continually strives to improve, the present work considers professional development and training opportunities in the professional lives of academic librarians and staff. Interview data from three academic librarians and one academic library staff member provided insight into how these individuals engage with diverse students in all aspects of their work. Additionally, interviews with a library director and head of public services provided insight into institutional and organizational level engagement with diversity, inclusion and cultural competency. Content analysis of the interview transcripts examines three themes: difference and diversity, engagement with students and professional development opportunities. This work discusses these themes utilizing Montiel-Overall's (2009) cultural competency framework for library and information professionals and the American Library Association's (2012) Diversity Standards: Cultural Competency for Academic Librarians. This works in progress poster also includes a discussion of the challenges in conducting qualitative research given the effects of COVID-19 and how the research project was altered because of the ongoing pandemic.

ALISE RESEARCH TAXONOMY TOPICS

academic libraries; continuing education; critical librarianship

AUTHOR KEYWORDS

academic libraries; cultural competency; higher education; professional development

REFERENCES

- American Library Association. (2012). Diversity standards: Cultural competency for academic librarians. Retrieved from: <http://www.ala.org/acrl/standards/diversity>
- Montiel-Overall, P. (2009). Cultural competence: A conceptual framework for library and information science professionals. *Library Quarterly*, 79 (2), 175-204.