

The Social Justice Imperative in Library and Information Science

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Abstract:

This poster presents the theoretical framework and development of the Social Justice Collaboratorium, a project undertaken by the 2013 cohort of Spectrum Doctoral Fellows. This work in progress aims to develop a user-driven online tool for Library & Information Science faculty who wish to incorporate social justice into the LIS curriculum.

Keywords: Social Justice, Library and Information Science, Education, Online Tools, Pedagogy, Informatics

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1 Introduction

A key approach to redefining libraries and librarianship in the 21st Century is for the field of practice to take up social justice as a main objective (Morales, Knowles, and Bourg, 2014). Though a popular notion in library science, social justice goals such as equity of access and representation are not as prevalent today as they perhaps should be. A key challenge might be the very fact that librarianship is still mostly white and mostly female (Morales et al., 2014) or that librarians might not have a strong critical theory background that would allow them to make meaningful and long-lasting changes to their professional practice (Schroeder and Hollister, 2014). To address this documented gap, the 2013 cohort of the Spectrum Doctoral Fellowship is developing an online pedagogical tool to support library and information science faculty as they implement social justice into the LIS curriculum.

2 Developing a Critical Tool for LIS Education

The Spectrum Doctoral Fellows 2013 cohort of the American Library Association are currently developing The Social Justice Collaboratorium to introduce and reinforce the tenets of social justice within library and information science education and research, and to make them available to library and information science faculty and program directors as they train the next generation of library and information science professionals. Envisioned as an alliance of LIS faculty, practitioners, students, activists, researchers and change agents, the Collaboratorium aims ultimately to educate and empower communities by transforming curriculum and practice through integrative approaches, community engagement, experiential and service learning, and multicultural and international perspectives.

2.1 Key Features

Grounded on the belief that “all human beings have an inherent worth and deserve information services that help address their information needs” (Rioux, 2010), the Social Justice Collaboratorium is a user-driven online tool and community intended to be a clearinghouse for research and a critical space that links knowledge to action through user contribution, collaboration, and creation. Featured resources will include traditional formats such as syllabus templates, reading lists, and book groups, as well as modules for faculty video lectures, student research and projects, resources for professional development, and spaces for dialogue and discussion. Additionally, it will become a repository of best practices and models for those who strive to bring social justice into the profession by way of practice as well as research. Available as an online research and pedagogical tool for LIS educators, practitioners,

and supporters, the Collaboratorium will spark a much-needed dialogue to advance social justice within Library and Information Science education.

3 Methods

The methods used for developing this tool are divided into three stages: data gathering, scoping, and design and testing. During the data-gathering phase, the fellows will execute a series of surveys to key faculty and researchers, a portion of the eventual users, in order to draft a requirement analysis for the tool's key functions. Through the subsequent phase of creating the requirement analysis, a project scope will be developed to serve as the basis for a call for proposals, which will be used to recruit a team of developers and designers. With the help of the design team, and the survey data, initial wireframes will be drafted to serve in testing and tool development. At the same time, the research team will begin gathering initial content from users in order to begin populating the site. Once some content has been successfully uploaded, the research team will begin beta testing the Collaboratorium in order to identify ways to optimize the tool and enhance its functionality.

4 Conclusion

The poster will depict the theoretical framework behind the project, the work in progress, and the methods involved in the design and implementation of this online collaboration tool. This critical theory-based pedagogical tool will fill a perceptible gap in the library and information science field at the educational level, which will serve to prepare librarians in all fields to undertake social justice in their work and research.

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