Introduction

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Scope and Rationale
The articles included in this issue of Library Trends recognize the organic relationship between social justice and library and information science (LIS)—here discussed as both a subject and a field of practice—and the varied services associated with it. The concerns and views expressed by the authors exemplify the work-in-progress that has arisen in different library and information contexts in order to achieve action-oriented, socially relevant outcomes. Such work includes the conceptualization and implementation of services that encourage community-wide changes via partnering with and providing programs for people on society’s margins. The essays in this issue address theories, methods, strategies, and case analysis in social justice research, teaching, and service design with a focus on social impact and community involvement in LIS. The topics presented here cover social justice activities in academic libraries, public libraries, school libraries, special libraries, and other information-related settings found in countries throughout the world.

There are diverse ways to harness the topic of social justice in LIS. For example, library directors and managers might personalize social justice in terms of meaningful changes they have witnessed during their years of leadership in their particular work contexts. Philosophers and political analysts might conceptualize social justice as an intellectual, analytical process. The authors who have contributed to this issue offer the reader multiple viewpoints on how social justice initiatives are made manifest in library and information settings. As a collection, these articles may serve as an overview of the potential that the social justice construct offers to LIS professionals. The hybrid of the two domains might spark future development and growth in new ways by offering social justice concepts that add to the body of knowledge within LIS and beyond.

Brief clarification is required at this point regarding the use of the term “Library and Information Science and Services.” This broad term is an attempt to acknowledge the diverse range of activities (theory and practice) associated with information creation, organization, management, dissemination, and education, and how the intersections between these activities relate to various user community dynamics. The opinions expressed in this introduction are based on my reflections as an educator and as a community action researcher who has been immersed in information-related settings. These opinions are not meant to be considered as all-encompassing pronouncements or as final statements on any matter. Instead, their purpose is to open up the proverbial closet and provide opportunities to initiate dialogue, discussion, and constructive debate across our varied circumstances and identities, to reflect on critical questions in LIS surrounding social justice, socially relevant outcomes, and more. I also interweave my own comments and thoughts on the shift of social justice from the periphery to a core consideration in LIS and in my own professional journey.

**Definition and Conceptualization**

The term “social justice” goes beyond the legal sphere in applying the idea of justice in its administration and maintenance of fair laws to every aspect of social life (Lebacqz, 1986). The term refers to the condition under which individuals and groups are equitably treated in society (Barry, 2005). Western scholars of many disciplines have long debated notions of social justice from many points of view, including law, politics, theology, philosophy, and economics (Guillermina & Wegener, 1997; Plato, 1984). In the 1840s, the Thomist Jesuit philosopher Luigi Taparelli coined the term “social justice” to conceptualize the tensions between the rights of individuals and the idea of the “common good” against the backdrop of the social and political transformations of the nineteenth century (Barry, 1989; Behr, 2003).

In the twentieth century, social justice concepts were assimilated into secular conversations surrounding human rights, government policy, public philosophy, and respect for individual needs that called attention to the “social” facets of the affects, behavior, actions, interactions, and relationships between people in society as reflected in every aspect of their lives (Brighouse, 2005; Fleishacker, 2005). Additionally, the idea of social justice has evolved to include the intangible concerns of ethics and morality associated with people’s values and beliefs, as well as the tangible actions that shape justice in a social situation (Glennon, 2003; Merkel, 2002; Oppen, 2006; Reid, 2004; Vandenbroucke, 2001). In their understanding of social justice, philosophers, intellectuals, and advocates have recognized the roots of the actions for change. They have provided reflective critiques that dissect prevailing attitudes, ideological frameworks, and practices in
order to encourage a more enlightened society (Habermas, 1993; Kellner, 1989).

Social justice as a model of inquiry provides a critical means of scrutiny. In the early years of the twenty-first century, this scrutiny has been undertaken in various legal, economic, political, criminal, civil, philosophical, linguistic, religious, historical, and sociocultural contexts (Arrigo, 1998; Safety, 2004; Toens, 2007). The effectiveness of social justice in the changing of power dynamics, human relations, and social interactions varies across institutional, organizational, governmental, educational, community-based, group-related, familial, person-to-person, and other formal and informal settings (Murphy, Wayne, Liden, & Erdogan, 2003). Particular LIS organizations such as the Radical Librarians Collective, Libraries without Borders, and the African Library Project have only begun to garner attention in recent years. Pateman & Vincent (2010) examine government and professional policy regarding the role of public libraries in addressing social exclusion in the United Kingdom in order to engage in social justice initiatives. In a broader context, van Dijk (2005) explores how information divides within and across demographic segments are deepened in high-tech societies. Bishop & Bruce (2005) address social justice outcomes in their efforts to apply community informatics, community inquiry, and participatory action research in LIS. Dasgupta (2002), Mcharazo & Koopman (2007), Miao (2002), and others have positioned librarianship as a tool of economic and social change in the developing world. Lukenbill (1997), Seidelin & Jensen (2006), and Mehra & Dessel (2011) examine how libraries can adopt social justice approaches to minimize HIV/AIDS, poverty, social stigma, and ignorance.

Contemporary efforts at achieving social justice in service design, to promote community-wide progressive changes in society, have been only abstemiously adopted owing to the determination of their roles within a restricted social, political, and economic framework, circumscribed public perceptions, and regulated intellectual discourse (Mehra, Rioux, & Albright, 2009). As internal and external pressures continue to mount, it is to be hoped that the LIS professions will begin to engage more aggressively in social justice work to represent the needs of underserved populations in information-related efforts. Alternatively, LIS could languish and become nothing more than mere tools to support political and corporate control that furthers a hegemonic agenda. However, a middle path could emerge, with services that respond to the reality of the political, economic, and cultural moment wherein funding is controlled by these agencies, yet at the same time permitting LIS professionals to give voice to the need for social equity. Aspects of the business model (e.g., outcome-based assessment, efficiency, user-centric services) have their place in library and information enterprises, but it is important not to forget the spirit of the
social justice mission, which is to design systems and services that are equitable, meaningful, and empowering for marginalized and disenfranchised people.

**Issues in LIS**

LIS, in all its manifestations, is a service-based profession that has long been associated with traditions of humanism, open inquiry, and providing support to the poor and the underserved (e.g., Chatman, 1987; Childers & Post, 1975; Forsyth, 2005; Venturella, 1998). Humanitarian stances have served well as professional commitments in establishing significant demarcations of the scope, identity, and community roles of LIS (Gorman, 2000; Rioux, Albright, & Mehra, 2007). One study of public libraries in the United States (Martin, 1998) shows that there has been a reappearance of the “traditional library service” model (Gaines, 1980), an uptick in dedication to serving a diversity of library users (Harrell, 2002), and a surge in the adoption of concrete assessment criteria based on service impact on the lives of the “marginalized” (Durrance & Fisher-Pettigrew, 2002). Integrating critiques from users and staff about their experiences with the information processes and services (Phipps, 2001) has also become more important. Such shifts in approach have enabled the application of reformist library practices directed toward the needs of various disenfranchised populations based on a number of categories, such as race (Baldwin, 1995; Guerena, 2000), ethnicity (Liu & Redfern, 1997; Stern, 1991), class (Berman, 1998; Chatman, 1983), gender (Olson, 1997), disability (Klauber, 1998; U.S. National Commission on Libraries and Information Sciences [NCLIS], 1999), sexual orientation (Joyce & Schrader, 1997; Mehra & Braquet, 2011, 2007, 2006; Norman, 1999), and age (Abif & Obatala, 1998; Jones & Shoemaker, 2001). These shifts have led to the joining of idealism and pragmatism in local public library planning, decision-making, and service delivery in the integration into practice of the library’s philosophy of meeting the needs of particular communities of difference (McClure, 1987). Recently, the discourse surrounding library values has adopted the perspectives of both human rights (Phenix & de la Peña McCook, 2005; Samek, 2007; Samek & Rioux, 2008) and ethics (Carbo & Smith, 2008; Cordeiro, 2009; Fleischmann, Robins, & Wallace, 2009; Ocholla, Onyancha, & Britz, 2010).

Similarly, initial attempts to integrate social justice into LIS have been made in information science research and at formal professional associations. For example, several policy reports and guidelines published by the American Library Association (ALA), Public Library Association (PLA), and others have identified principles, professional implements, strategies, benchmarks, and codes of ethics meant to encourage a social justice discourse. The work of various committees, roundtables, taskforces, and professional forums within the ALA provide examples of efforts to mobilize
an internal response within the LIS professions, though they have had only a limited ability to take direct action to effect change or become more inclusive of local and regional representatives from outside the LIS world (Berman, 1997; Kranich, 2000; de la Peña McCook, 2004; Shorris, 2000).

Recently, examples of LIS involvement in social justice imperatives have been demonstrated by increases in library usage and by the emerging role of LIS professionals in creating library collections (e.g., fiction genres) and services (e.g., programming and events) in direct response to the changing needs of their local constituencies (Shulera, 2007). Moreover, progressive trends in twenty-first-century LIS development are integrating new attitudes and approaches to planning, management, and service practices in order to achieve social justice goals. Such improvements include the increased use of computers in new ways (e.g., social tagging, Library 2.0 software, etc.) to meet the information needs of various user communities via their dynamic and continued involvement in service assessment (Casey & Savastinuk, 2007).

A valid critique in recent years is that LIS social justice theory is still in its early stages, and that the explicit term “social justice” is only now beginning to appear in LIS literature (Britz, 2008; Jimerson, 2007). Historical analysis has showed that seldom was social justice explicitly articulated in LIS practice and research (Mehra, Albright, & Rioux, 2006), despite the social justice orientation that is implicit in many LIS works. In response, Rioux (2010) calls for an adoption of social justice as a metatheory in LIS. Although so far few scholarly materials have been written specifically about social justice in this context, the term is emerging as a useful conceptual tool to describe these qualitative aspects of LIS (Mehra, 2009; Mehra & Sandusky, 2009). A recent critique of mainstream LIS discourses addressing social justice issues identified shortcomings of the professions (Mehra, Rioux, & Albright, 2009). The work called for greater attention to developing social justice initiatives in LIS based on: (a) use of outcome-based, socially relevant assessment methods in evaluating library services (Immroth & de la Peña McCook, 2000); (b) integration of local perspectives and ontologies into formalized organizational tools of information; and (c) development of equitable partnering relationships with underserved stakeholders (Guerena & Erazo, 2000).

Since 1990 the Progressive Librarians Guild (PLG), an organization devoted to the open exchange of radical views on library and information issues, has constantly challenged the LIS professions’ “rapid drift into dubious alliances with business and the information industry, and into complacent acceptance of service to an unquestioned political, economic and cultural status quo” (PLG, 2014). Materials published in the Progressive Librarian, the PLG Bulletin, and the PLG Union Blog represent a critical perspective and progressive politics that seek to push the boundaries of the LIS professions to discard their outdated “sterile notion of neutrality”
and “strongly oppose the commodification of information which turns the ‘information commons’ into privatized, commercialized zones,” making explicit the “political value choices” librarians encounter in their every-day work practices (PLG, 2014). In taking such a critical discourse further toward concrete actions to promote progressive transformations in society, LIS professionals must also get more actively involved in working on society’s margins to influence positive social justice changes. It is very important to accelerate such ongoing efforts to reconnect with localized communities on the basis of newly constructed modes of interaction. This will enhance the integration of social justice ideals into LIS, nurturing equitable ties with people on society’s margins in order to create usable and useful library services, programs, collections, and activities that are directly relevant in the everyday lives of all community members (Mehra & Robinson, 2009; Mehra & Srinivasan, 2007).

As a “how-to” resource for providing LIS readers with a pathway toward this goal, the collection of articles in this issue introduces potential directions of social justice work in service design. The authors discuss wide-ranging efforts to develop, test, and apply new concepts, terminologies, and methods (e.g., community informatics, participatory archiving) that share intersecting elements with social justice to push the boundaries of traditional LIS conceptualizations toward more progressive outcomes. It is, of course, impossible to include all scenarios, and any omissions are due to my shortcomings as an editor and the space- and time-bound parameters of the editorial process. Yet this is a start. These essays may lay the groundwork for greater development of LIS social justice theory and practice in order to promote active and efficacious social justice agendas across the diverse professions. They may also help to accelerate the formation of a theory of social justice in LIS whose roots are clearly present in the field’s and professions’ historical emphasis on humanism and fairness in library practice, service design, and research. In the years to come, the assumption and expectation are that we in the LIS professions will continue to engage in more of such work that uses social justice parameters to frame, apply, and represent the needs of underserved populations in society in the designing and development of fair, equitable, and just information systems and services that are meaningful and accessible for disempowered people.

History of Legacy

The social justice theme of this issue evolved out of work I undertook as a graduate student at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign (UIUC). Over a ten-year period, across the disciplines of landscape architecture, South Asian and Middle Eastern studies, religious studies, and library and information science, I worked with underserved populations
with the aim of achieving social justice agendas and exploring the role of information and technology use by marginalized cultures of “difference” in reaching these goals. Table 1 provides a summary of my involvement in social justice–related research projects (1995 to present), noted in terms of the underserved population, geographical setting, information context, framework of research, methods employed, and the general timeframe of data collection. During the initial years of these investigations, the pervasiveness of information-related work across disciplinary boundaries was significant. Community-building and community development were foregrounded, even though the term “social justice” was not conspicuously used throughout this time. The social justice construct, however, was manifest, its attributes intertwined with the vocabulary employed to advance ideas: “marginalized users,” “participatory action research,” “community information networks,” “digital divide,” “community informatics,” and “situated inquiry,” for example. Furthermore, in 2004 I had the opportunity to teach a course entitled “Social Justice in the Information Professions” in UIUC’s Graduate School of Library and Information Science (GSLIS), previously taught by Ann P. Bishop. I owe a debt of gratitude to her and to other GSLIS faculty, among them Bertram C. Bruce and Martin Wolske. Their application of social justice–related frameworks and approaches has influenced my work to this day.

Insights from the Journey
As social justice continues to be adopted in LIS and related professions, my experiences with applying this construct as a professional in the field are quite relevant. After accepting a tenure track position at the School of Information Sciences at the University of Tennessee in 2005, I have continued to use social justice concepts in my research, teaching, and service activities involving minority and underserved populations. The idea of community engagement proved helpful in relating social justice to these opportunities that were offered in the diverse professions of LIS, in the American academy, and beyond. Community engagement provided a means to proactively promote community-building and development outcomes that attempted to make a real difference in people’s lives. Social equity agendas were enacted in LIS contexts via collaborative community engagement at various levels of involvement of the underserved population by representatives of the different project experiences, in order to meet the needs of minority populations dispersed across local, regional, national, and international boundaries. The level of involvement of the partnering individuals and groups was obviously not balanced and depended on such factors as the availability of contacts, the definition of research goals, and the amount of time dedicated to engagement. The intent of these activities has been to expand the capacities of the LIS profes-
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Underserved population</th>
<th>Research context: location</th>
<th>Information context &amp; framework of research</th>
<th>Research methods</th>
<th>Timeframe of data collection</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Small businesses &amp; public libraries</td>
<td>Tennessee &amp; North Carolina</td>
<td>Extending the role of rural public libraries in small business economic development &amp; economic growth in the Appalachian region.</td>
<td>Web-based surveys &amp; interviews; Website content analysis; Strategic planning; Workshop design.</td>
<td>Fall 2013 onward</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural libraries &amp; communities</td>
<td>Southern &amp; Central Appalachian region; Tennessee</td>
<td>Information poverty in Appalachian rural libraries; Need for integration of IT &amp; rural management in LIS education; Use of open-source software.</td>
<td>Curriculum design &amp; IT &amp; management education in LIS for rural communities; Web-based surveys &amp; interviews; Website content analysis; Strategic planning.</td>
<td>Spring 2008 onward</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Librarians &amp; information professionals in India</td>
<td>India</td>
<td>Library services in India; Use of information &amp; communication technologies in Indian libraries &amp; information settings.</td>
<td>Web-based surveys; Website content analysis.</td>
<td>Spring 2012 onward</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lesbian, gay, bisexual, &amp; transgender community</td>
<td>Knoxville, Tennessee</td>
<td>Information advocacy &amp; social justice; LGBT content in the LIS curriculum; Diversity in the library; LGBT youth information-seeking behaviors.</td>
<td>Participatory action research; Qualitative interviews; Website content analysis.</td>
<td>Spring 2005 onward</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cross-cultural faculty &amp; students</td>
<td>University of Puerto Rico &amp; University of Tennessee</td>
<td>Intercultural leadership toolkit for LIS professionals; Intercultural education.</td>
<td>Qualitative analysis; Grounded theory; Reflective practice; Seminar discussions.</td>
<td>Spring 2006–Spring 2008</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public librarians serving people living with HIV/AIDS</td>
<td>Tennessee</td>
<td>Community health information services in public libraries; Community informatics; Role of LIS education in the development of community health information services.</td>
<td>Qualitative interviews; Email surveys; Critical research.</td>
<td>Summer 2008</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information &amp; communication technology professionals in India</td>
<td>Bangalore, India</td>
<td>Human information behavior; Cultural differences in ICT use.</td>
<td>Content analysis of Web information; Qualitative interviews; Telephone surveys.</td>
<td>Summer 2007, Fall 2007</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lesbian, gay, bisexual &amp; transgender South Asians</td>
<td>Global</td>
<td>Computer-mediated communication.</td>
<td>Analysis of an online mailing list; Critical research.</td>
<td>2007–2012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International Asian graduate students</td>
<td>University of Tennessee</td>
<td>Cross-cultural information needs &amp; IT use; Information-seeking behaviors of international students.</td>
<td>Qualitative interviews; Critical research.</td>
<td>Summer 2006</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>African American women students</strong></td>
<td><strong>Academic librarians serving people living with HIV/AIDS</strong></td>
<td><strong>International doctoral students in LIS</strong></td>
<td><strong>Puerto Rican community</strong></td>
<td><strong>International teaching assistants</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>University of Tennessee, Knoxville, Tennessee</td>
<td>Priority information needs of minority students; Information support services for minority students. Community health information services in academic libraries; Community informatics.</td>
<td>University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign</td>
<td>Cross-cultural learning experiences/perspectives; Internationalizing interventions in LIS education; Information-seeking process in a cross-cultural context.</td>
<td>Paseo Buricua neighborhood, Chicago, Ill.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Qualitative interviews; Critical research.</td>
<td>Qualitative interviews; Critical research.</td>
<td>Qualitative interviews; Participant observation; Content analysis of electronic interactions; Action research; Critical research.</td>
<td>Service learning; Action research; Community informatics.</td>
<td>Mixed: Quantitative surveys &amp; qualitative interviews; Critical research.</td>
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sions in ways that enhance the role of the underserved population and include “outsiders” in the information creation-organization-management-dissemination process.

Recently, there has also been a concerted effort to connect the social justice construct to issues of diversity and intercultural communication in LIS in order to expand its scope of representation and relevance in twenty-first-century contexts. This has meant applying conceptual frameworks in LIS—such as human information behavior, information seeking and use, and social informatics—with interdisciplinary approaches comprising critical theory, feminist and cross-cultural studies, postcolonial literature, race and gender research, and the use of information and communication technologies (ICT) to empower disenfranchised communities to bring about changes in their sociocultural, sociopolitical, and socioeconomic circumstances. The purpose of such efforts was, again, to reconceptualize the LIS professions and services in an expanded capacity in order to partner with people on the margins of society. This has involved collaborating at different levels of engagement with various minorities, international and cross-cultural communities that have been affected by diaspora, sexual and gender minorities, rural populations, low-income families, and homebound and isolated people in order to represent their perspectives while shaping LIS and other community-based information services.

Additionally, the journey of my understanding of social justice has involved adopting a multipronged approach to the process of meaning-making. On the one hand, it has been important to apply social justice philosophies and adopt social justice practices in LIS settings, developing extended services, programs, collections, and innovative ways to practice and to educate. On the other hand, the process of furthering social justice has also involved expanding the relevance and perceptions of LIS beyond its professional territorial boundaries in making external connections with individuals, groups, agencies, organizations, and institutions at the political, social, cultural, economic, educational, public and private, administrative policy, and management levels. Within LIS and beyond, it was important to recognize social justice in focused LIS-related work experiences as well as to develop its relevance to other aspects of reality. That meant, for example, creating courses on social justice topics related to LIS and making connections to related subjects such as gender inequities, information needs of sexual minorities, and the marginalization of rural communities. Yet it was also important to integrate the application of social justice with other information-focused topics such as information organization, collection development, grant writing, and public library management. In my journey to create acknowledgment of my social justice work within the professions, I also had to show the embeddedness and relationship of these efforts to broader matters of concern in LIS. At a conceptual level, social justice, in terms of making the world a
fair and just place for all people, fitted within the larger need to develop a deeper understanding of the users and their social and cultural contexts in working toward a more user-centered LIS. Methodologically, the social justice approach and related efforts like action research as a “doing” were housed within the domain of qualitative techniques and humanistic strategies in LIS.

**Important Milestones**

In more recent years, I have observed how the topic of social justice has begun to receive more attention in LIS. For example, in response to President Clara M. Chu’s call for the 2015 Association for Library and Information Science Education (ALISE) Annual Conference, themed “Mirrors and Windows: Reflections on Social Justice and Re-imagining LIS Education” (Chicago, January 27–30, 2015), as the coordinating co-chair with Kendra S. Albright I was happy to observe the emergence of the concept of social justice take center stage during ALISE’s centennial celebrations. As we noted elsewhere, the hundred years of ALISE history did us proud in the present moment, while looking back and looking forward at the service and community engagement ethos of the LIS professions and its teaching and research in terms of social justice and social equity concepts, constructs, terminologies, and praxis.

Some important milestones in my use of social justice in peer-reviewed publications and presentations at professional venues include the following: a short paper (Mehra, Albright, & Rioux, 2006) and a discussion panel (Rioux, Albright, & Mehra, 2007) published in the proceedings of the 2006 Annual Meeting of the American Society for Information Science & Technology; an encyclopedia article (Mehra, Rioux, & Albright, 2009); service as editor of a special issue of the *Qualitative and Quantitative Methods in Libraries Journal* on “Social Justice, Social Inclusion” (Mehra, 2014a), which also included two articles (Mehra & Singh, 2014; Mehra et al., 2014); two peer-reviewed presentations at the 2012 and 2013 Qualitative and Quantitative Methods in Libraries International Conferences; and an invited guest editorial on “What is the value of social justice in Pakistan’s library and information science professions?” in the *Pakistan Journal of Information Management and Libraries* (Mehra, 2014b).

**Articles in this Collection**

The collection of ten articles (excluding this introduction) in this issue has been categorized into three sections. Part 1, “Concepts and Approaches,” includes two articles that provide a broad theoretical and analytical perspective for understanding social justice and its relevance to LIS. Kay Mathiesen introduces a multifaceted conceptual framework of informational justice and iDistributive justice for LIS responsive to their core concerns, drawing from the disciplinary literatures in both philosophy and LIS. Tami
Oliphant introduces discursive psychology and critical discourse analysis as fruitful approaches for investigating the critical intersections of LIS and social justice that are examined and analyzed for goodness of fit with Kevin Rioux’s (2010) five underlying assumptions of social justice metatheory.

Part 2, “Library Contexts and Information Services,” includes five articles that are more specific in their focus on particular information settings and services. Applying critical discourse analysis, Freeda Brook, Dave Ellenwood, and Althea Eannace Lazzaro examine racism and the culture of Whiteness in academic libraries in three major areas of public services, namely, the monocultural geography of spaces, staffing and hiring, and reference service delivery. John Vincent discusses the needs and demands of people who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, queer/questioning, or intersex by examining, for example, what practices have been adopted for public libraries in the United Kingdom, and contrasting these with examples of locations where such practices have not been adopted. José Antonio Merlo Vega and Clara M. Chu discuss different types of social justice actions taken by Spanish academic and public libraries at the professional, community, social, political, digital, cultural heritage, economic, and ontological levels during recent times of economic hardships and economic crisis. Next, using focus group data from seven school libraries in the US state of New Jersey, Punit Dadlani and Ross J. Todd take an emergent approach to data analysis through the use of an emic/etic data coding process, and propose a typology for understanding the connection between social justice principles and the provision of information technology services in school libraries. In the last article in this section, Danielle Allard and Shawna Ferris use a participatory archiving approach to further social justice objectives in project research and development of three Canadian digital archives for marginalized communities as a result of engaging with anticolonial and antiviolence feminist methodologies.

Part 3, “Library and Information Science Education,” includes three articles that examine topics and approaches in LIS education that are pertinent to social justice issues. Loriene Roy explores whether LIS education can incorporate an ethical learning environment based on drawing connections between indigenous ecology, information ethics, and social justice theory as a prelude to considering an indigenous worldview. Kafi D. Kumasi and Nichole Manlove use the framework of multicultural curriculum reform, conceptualized as a social justice approach, to explore the core LIS curriculum looking for diversity levers, or conceptual access points where transformative academic knowledge related to diversity and social justice can be meaningfully integrated. In the final article in this collection, Rae-Anne Montague examines Mix IT Up!, an LIS initiative that blends theories and approaches in community informatics and youth services librarianship in order to further social justice agendas.

The current categorization of the ten selected articles is based on the
fifty-one abstracts initially submitted by June 30, 2013, in response to the first call for manuscripts shared at various professional meetings and electronic mailing lists. The articles also include some manuscripts from authors who were invited to submit based on their subject expertise and experiences in social justice work. The submissions were divided into first and second tiers, with sixteen chosen for this issue and the remainder to be considered, if revised and resubmitted by the authors, in case future opportunities emerged for publication on the topic. The initial attempt at categorization was based on the brief description that the authors had submitted in response to the call for proposals, with the assumption that the categories would be revised and refined. The initial categorization was helpful in identifying the scope and boundaries of the topic of social justice in LIS and informed support decisions regarding selection or rejection of the proposals for the journal issue. The categories emerged based on the proposals submitted. Each proposal, obviously, represented multiple possibilities; the list of categories was created from the topics that emerged in the forefront based on the descriptions in the titles and abstracts submitted. Identifying the methods of data collection and analysis and describing the evidence to support claims were important factors in determining the selection from the submitted proposals. Another aspect that was considered significant was a discussion of socially relevant outcomes, such as the following examples: identification of concrete tangible actions; representation of underserved needs; community-wide progressive changes; partnering with, and, on behalf of people on society’s margins; and inclusion of theory and practice. Initial categories included various minority and under-represented groups; information access issues; LIS education; proposed strategies, frameworks, and methods for implementing and measuring the effectiveness of social justice initiatives; and the impact of technology changes. Representation of academic, public, school, and special libraries, as well as museums, archives, and other information-related settings, in an international context of analysis was also considered while making the selection.

Once the abstract proposals were accepted, the next step was for the authors to submit their draft manuscripts for anonymous peer review, followed by the sharing of reviewers’ feedback with them. Each draft manuscript was reviewed by at least two professionals based on their research expertise overlap with the manuscript subject. As issue editor, I also had detailed conversations with some of the authors to clarify and discuss the reviewers’ feedback, as well as my own expectations and the threads of connections I was trying to weave throughout this collection. In this process, we lost six manuscripts owing to the authors’ inability to meet the deadlines or reluctance to respond to the changes suggested. I want to provide a word of appreciation to the reviewers for their efforts and time in providing detailed feedback to the authors, especially the following
individuals: Alistair Black, Kimberly Black-Parker, Donna Braquet, Mirah Dow, LaVerne Gray, Delicia Greene, Lorna Peterson, Susan Searing, Suzanne Stauffer, Mega Subramaniam, Tonyia Tidline, and Peta Wellstead.

Regarding the ten articles that have been included in this collection, the following thoughts are important to share with readers. First, there has been an effort to clearly and explicitly articulate the meanings and characteristics of social justice in its theoretical and philosophical aspects, as well as its understanding as a methodological approach, and how these were relevant and applicable to the context of the work and experiences documented in the article. Since the social justice construct is in its infancy in LIS, this approach was critical to helping readers recognize what we mean by “social justice,” beyond a vague feel-good, “loosey-goosey” term. Second, there was an intentional effort to have authors articulate the methodological approaches that they followed, including the various steps of systematic research procedures and protocols that informed the development of the content and analysis. This description of a methodological strategy may be important for others who want to initiate such efforts to address social justice in their own contexts. Social justice work is marginally acknowledged in the scholarly world (and the academy), partly as a result of misperceptions that it is not based on systematic and rigorous methods of research and analysis. As part of telling a story about social justice efforts in particular projects or settings, it is important to articulate the steps and strategies that informed the development of the story. It is also important to state here that regarding research methodology, I am using the term with much more flexibility than is applied traditionally. The expectation is, of course, not to necessarily identify something along the traditional lines in the application of the social scientific “reproducible” methods. I used the concept of identifying as relevant to social justice the strategies or efforts that led to the experiences that authors documented in their articles. Lastly, I also nudged authors to come up with a tangible “product” or deliverable for readers to come away with after reading the article. This took the form of a set of guidelines, a framework, a model, strategies of best practice, etc., for library educators and practitioners and others to be able to implement or apply in practice.

Where Do We Go from Here?
The 2016 ALISE Annual Conference, “Radical Change: Inclusion & Innovation,” which was held in Boston, Massachusetts, in January 2016, offered an opportunity to build upon the conversations surrounding the social justice theme that were initiated at the 2015 conference. In addition, the discussion on social justice in LIS in this issue of Library Trends will be extended in a forthcoming monograph I have coedited with Kevin Rioux, Progressive Community Action: Critical Theory and Social Justice in Library and
Information Science, with expected publication by Library Juice Press in 2016. These are good beginning steps in ensuring that the dialogue on social justice in LIS does not stop. There is still much to be done and long miles to tread before we sleep. But, at least for now, we have got started on our journey in beginning to think about how to expand our traditional notions and develop new directions that wholeheartedly adopt and integrate social justice into our thinking across the LIS settings, instead of isolated and fragmented efforts. For the sooner we continue to move forward in our discussions of LIS and services in terms of social justice, social inclusion, diversity, and the needs of disenfranchised users, the more effective we will be in extending our roles in society and embracing more progressive values and practices relevant in the twenty-first century.

Today, as social justice begins to transform our professional identity and work in LIS, it may help to articulate the impacts of our efforts and promote dialogue that makes explicit the political and economic influences on our professions, in order to highlight current realities. These days, when there are tremendous internal and external pressures in our varied institutional settings to show the outcomes of our work in terms of return on investment and community impacts, social justice provides a potentially rich opportunity to extend our role in the globalized networked information environment. The value of such a strategy lies in identifying and highlighting in public perception the unique contribution of the LIS professions, their distinctive role in promoting community-wide progressive changes to address the information needs and expectations of all human beings, particularly minority and underserved populations. As LIS professionals, we are in a desirable and advantageous position to foster awareness of the insider-outsider power discourse and to question who is visible and who is invisible, who is excluded and who is included, in the distribution of power, prestige, honors, representation, visibility, resources, and information in individual societies and in the world at large. Identifying, articulating, describing, and analyzing LIS experiences in terms of action-oriented, socially relevant outcomes achieved via information-related work becomes a key step in this regard. Social justice in LIS may thus provide what my colleague José Aponte, executive director of the San Diego Library District, addressed in his talk on “Dancing with the Elephants: Stay Relevant in Extraordinary Times” at the 2009 Nevada Library Association Annual Conference. It might bring us all together at the proverbial table to play a more important and visible role of community leadership at political, economic, policy, corporate, and management levels of decision making with the bigwigs—“the elephants”—to resist the forces of power and domination that trample on democracy, civil society, and individual freedom. The common focus on social justice could be the unity that binds the diversity of how we measure the nature of our varied
activities and work in different ways, providing a philosophical, theoretical, methodological, and fundamental substratum in LIS that has been missing historically and in the contemporary context.

REFERENCES


Bharat Mehra is associate professor in the School of Information Sciences at the University of Tennessee. His research examines diversity and intercultural communication, social justice in library and information science (LIS), critical and cross-cultural studies, and community informatics or the use of information and communication technologies to empower minority and underserved populations to make meaningful changes in their everyday lives. Mehra has applied conceptual frameworks in LIS with interdisciplinary approaches to expand the profession’s traditional definition, scope, extent, representation, and relevance in the twenty-first century. He has collaborated with racial/ethnic groups, international communities, sexual minorities, rural librarians, small businesses, and others, to represent their experiences in shaping the design and development of various community-based information systems and services. He primarily teaches courses on information organization and representation, public library management, collection development, resources and services for adults, diversity services in libraries, and grant development for information professionals.