8-12-2017

Partners in mission: A critical examination of the library as a locus for social justice

Jennifer Nutefall
Santa Clara University, jnutefall@scu.edu

Jackie Kremer
Fairfield University, jkremer@fairfield.edu

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Conference: Commitment to Justice in Jesuit Higher Education
Date: Saturday August 12, 2017
Location: Seattle University

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Partners in Mission: A Critical Examination of the Library as a Locus for Social Justice

JENNIFER NUTEFALL, UNIVERSITY LIBRARIAN, SANTA CLARA UNIVERSITY

JACALYN KREMER, HEAD OF LIBRARY ACADEMIC PARTNERSHIPS & ASSESSMENT, FAIRFIELD UNIVERSITY
Our research explores with a critical lens the impact academic libraries have, on their own and in collaboration with campus partners, in promoting social justice at their institutions.

Inquiry #1: Who are we?

Inquiry #2: What do we do?
In May 2017, a demographic survey was sent to AJCU Library Directors with a request to distribute to all their library staff. The intent of this survey was to explore the question:

What is the current race/ethnic, gender, religious, socio-economic, disability status and sexual orientation of AJCU librarians and how does this align with the make-up of our students?
Inquiry #1: Who are we?

Response Rate of Survey:

- 175 people responded* (19%)
  - 112 professional librarians
  - 39 paraprofessionals
  - 24 other

- 90% of responders were full-time

* We estimate 935 total library employees over AJCU schools.
NOTE:
AJCU students sex breakdown matches national averages (AJCU, 2014) & (NCES, 2014). Nationwide librarian female/male ratio is 81%/19% (ALA, 2012).
Inquiry #1: Who are we?

AJCU Library Staff
Sexual Orientation Self Identification

- LGBT, 15%
- Questioning or Not Report, 5%
- Heterosexual, 80%

Of those born 1980-1998, aka Millennials, 7.3% identify as LGBT (Gates, 2017)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>AJCU LIBRARY STAFF</th>
<th>MILLENNIALS</th>
<th>AJCU STUDENTS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Catholic</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>Catholic: 16%</td>
<td>Catholic: 54%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Protestant</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>Protestant: 36%</td>
<td>Other Christian: 15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unaffiliated</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>Unaffiliated (nones): 36%</td>
<td>Jewish: 1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Atheist/Agnostic</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>Jewish: 2%</td>
<td>Muslim: 1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Claim no religious</td>
<td></td>
<td>Other: 10%</td>
<td>Undeclared: 21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>preference</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Other: 7%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>7%</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

(Pew, 2014)  

(AJCU, 2014) Note: FY 12-13 data
Inquiry #1: Who are we?

71% of AJCU students are White (AJCU, 2014)

Race/Ethnicity
National % and AJCU Library Staff

- Black or African American
  - AJCU Library Staff %: 5%
  - National Students %: 15%

- Hispanic of any race
  - AJCU Library Staff %: 6%
  - National Students %: 18%

- White
  - AJCU Library Staff %: 78%
  - National Students %: 57%
Inquiry #1: Who are we?

77% of US full time faculty are White (NCES, 2017).

86% of academic libraries are White (ALA, 2012)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Race/Ethnicity</th>
<th>AJCU Librarians %</th>
<th>Hispanic of any race</th>
<th>White</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Black or African American</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>81%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic of any race</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
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</table>
Inquiry #2: *What do we do?*

Survey sent to all 28 AJCU Library directors
- 18 completed surveys (64%)

21 questions focusing on the intersection of social justice with
- Collections
- Space
- Archives & Special Collections
- Staff efforts to support social justice
- Information Literacy
- Human Resources
- Programs
Inquiry #2: What do we do?

Library has been successful in hiring and retaining staff from underrepresented minority groups

- % who think it is extremely or very important: 88%
- % who are successful: 30%
Inquiry #2: *What do we do?*

Library has developed action plans for recruiting underrepresented minorities into library and archives work.

- 75% who think it is extremely or very important
- 25% who have action plans
Inquiry #2: What do we do?

My archives collect and preserve materials related to underrepresented and marginalized groups.

- % who say they collect: 56%
- % who think it is important or very important: 76%
Inquiry #2: What do we do?

Incorporating social justice frameworks into information literacy education

- % who think it is extremely or very important: 94%
- % who are incorporating social justice frameworks: 78%
Inquiry #2: What do we do?

Librarians collaborate with faculty on social justice research projects/community based action research

- 88% of librarians are collaborating
- 76% think it is extremely important or very important
Inquiry #2: What do we do?

Having a personal librarian or similar program assigned to international students or devoted to underrepresented or marginalized groups

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Underrepresented</th>
<th>International</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>% who have a personal librarian program for underrepresented groups</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% who believe it is extremely important or important for underrepresented groups</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% who have a personal librarian program for international students</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% who believe it is extremely important or important for international students</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
What We Learned

STAFF DIVERSITY

- 71% of AJCU librarians are female. Librarianship is a female dominated profession and AJCU female/male ratio is less than average. Current students (nationally and AJCU) are about 57% female.

- AJCU library staff is more diverse in sexual orientation than the national averages and college age students.

- AJCU library staff race/ethnicity appears to be similar to AJCU students, on average. There is a significant difference between AJCU demographics and national student demographics. Future student demographics are projected to be more racially diverse.

- More young people are identifying as religiously unaffiliated. Similar patterns are seen with library staff.
What We Learned

RECRUITMENT

- Library directors acknowledge the need to recruit and retain a diverse staff and the creation of action plans. What support might be needed for them to create and implement action plans?

LIBRARY PRACTICES

- There is a significant gap in importance versus practice in collecting unique/archival material from underrepresented communities.

- AJCU librarians are actively incorporating social justice frameworks into research instruction.
What Actions Can We Take

Staff Diversity

- Look to hire more Hispanic and African American library staff. Consider encouraging staff to get an MLS.
- Library directors collaborate to create and adopt a diversity action plan.
- AJCU collects diversity data on a regular basis.
What Actions Can We Take

Collections

- In order to increase collections from underrepresented groups, these groups in the community and relevant community organizations must be identified.
- Develop workshops for archiving and preserving collections.

Instruction

- Promote courses that incorporate social justice frameworks into research instruction.
References


References


