Introduction

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The spring of 2020 surfaced unprecedented challenges, with a global pandemic and societal unrest initiated by highly publicized police killings of citizens in Minnesota, Kentucky, and elsewhere. Although for many people throughout the US and Canada, the confluence of events has brought a new level of awareness and new vocabulary for such issues as wide disparities in health treatment and outcomes for communities of color, or the concept of systemic racism, these realities and taxonomies have been studied and written about for generations. And although current events and the contemporary political and social climates may be bringing new understanding of areas of sociological inquiry, such as critical race theory, the perennial question from many—even the most well-meaning practitioners from the library, archives, and other cultural heritage and memory sectors—is, "What are the implications for our communities of practice?" In other words, "How are these issues relevant to our profession?" And, "How do these principles play out in the values and mission of libraries, archives, museums, and similar institutions?"

The content for this issue of *Research Library Issues* (*RLI*) was planned and solicited long before COVID-19 or global protests for racial equity. The topics and themes, however, remain relevant, with perspectives that offer both practical applications of existing and emerging theories and practices, as well as more aspirational reflections.

In the first article, two librarians of color at the University of Illinois at Chicago, Teresa Helena Moreno and Jennifer M. Jackson, chronicle a process whereby critical race and feminist theory informed the assessment and development of an undergraduate engagement program that was connected to broader, campus-level, student-success efforts. The authors reimagined how to define student success in the

context of one of the most diverse, urban universities in the US and developed new programming and success metrics to reflect that.

In an informal interview, three practitioners with responsibilities for diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI), either within their institutions or on a consortial/association level, discuss the impact of these two historical events on their current work and their future plans. Maha Kumaran is associate librarian for the Education and Music Library at the University of Saskatchewan. Jeff Witt is an organizational and leadership development professional for the University of Michigan Library. Twanna Hodge is the diversity, equity, and inclusion librarian for the University of Florida Libraries.

The third article in this issue features the work of Kiyomi Deards, visiting program officer for the Association of Research Libraries (ARL) from the University of Nebraska–Lincoln. To help ARL prepare to enhance its professional development efforts, Deards has been researching competency frameworks in DEI, as well as training and developmental providers and experiences that libraries and other industries have been implementing on a local level. Deards and I highlight a few examples from the extensive data set of providers and methodologies she identified.

These three articles are contrasting in their perspectives, from practical implementation of programs aligning with institutional mission, to a more comprehensive exploration of strategies for creating and sustaining organizational change in support of DEI and racial equity. As organizations and institutions struggle to find solutions to enduring and seemingly intractable problems, it seems clear that new approaches, vocabulary, and mindsets are needed in order to effect necessary changes. This issue of *RLI* offers several access points to this work, to the necessary change for the betterment of society, and to how libraries and archives can be catalysts for this critical work.

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