

2019/20 and 2020/21: Historic and consequential

The 2019/20 and 2020/21 academic years were both historic and consequential on many, if not all, of our campus communities. In many institutions, faculty, staff, and students gathered (on Zoom!) as learning communities to reflect on and deepen understanding of systemic racism and this consequential year, and to catalyze around commitments to racial equity and anti-racist education. On our campuses, we have created platforms to affirm voices and experiences, renew solidarity, and build collective capacity towards becoming more diverse, equitable, and inclusive colleges and universities. We have had the opportunity to participate in summits that affirm our campus communities, call us forward for greater solidarity and accountability, and position us for action, collaboration, and movement.

At the editors' campuses, faculty and staff have had many opportunities to reflect on what these historic and consequential years have opened up for themselves, as well as opportunities to reflect on why they think that moving to action on our commitments to equity, diversity, inclusion, and anti-racism at this time is critical.

These consequential years have shown us that the pandemic has laid bare and exacerbated the contours of inequality in higher education. It has also affirmed the imperative of anti-racism work to build more just and inclusive educational systems. We have seen how all-encompassing the active process of identifying and challenging racism is – by changing systems, challenging organizational structures, rewriting policies, modifying practices, and adjusting attitudes to redistribute power equitably.

Focusing specifically on academic libraries, these historic and consequential years have affirmed academic libraries' central role in upholding access and affordability for our students. These two academic years have provided myriad opportunities to demonstrate commitment to the core values of our profession, including access, confidentiality, privacy, democracy, diversity, education, lifelong learning, intellectual freedom, preservation, the public good, professionalism, service, social responsibility, and sustainability.

The accepted manuscripts for Volume 49 Issue 2 focus on many of these core values. Marino considers access, confidentiality, and privacy in his article "Privacy Concerns and the Prevalence of Third-Party Tracking Cookies on ARL Library Homepages." Access and service are Garvey's concerns; her article "Virtual Reference Amid COVID-19 Campus Closure: A Case Study and Assessment" adds to the growing literature on the surge in virtual reference during the COVID-19 period. A foundational component of many academic libraries' service portfolios, information literacy education is front-and-center for three of our authors – Foster, Lacy, and Wishkoski. Foster considers engagement in an online library class, specifically using extra credit activities to encourage student interaction. Lacy turns her attention to how improved faculty-led information literacy instruction contributes to greater student learning. Wishkoski assesses a pilot information literacy curriculum for English Composition. Wilkinson's interests lie elsewhere – in service quality improvement. Whether working remotely or onsite, public service librarians will recognize this all too familiar scenario – "I need help from a librarian or research expert . . . I need citation assistance." Wilkinson's article, "Constructing Citations: Reviewing Chat Transcripts to Improve Citation Assistance," provides practical suggestions to help practitioners navigate this terrain. Finally, Zhu is also interested in service design and delivery, inviting readers to join him in reflection on space planning for a Center for Digital Scholarship in China.

Looking ahead, at the formidable challenges that remain in front of us, the editors suggest that the advancement of equity, diversity, inclusion, and anti-racism should be embedded as a



fundamental component of everything we do, including financial investment, practices, policies, protocols, service design and delivery, culture, advocacy, and leadership. What is at stake if we fail to thoughtfully and visibly advance equity, diversity, inclusion, and anti-racism in all we do? Consider that academic library primacy, collection integrity, service quality, and library and professional values alike just might be at risk. This is an immediate challenge and opportunity. It is not a “potential risk ahead.”

Librarians and information professionals are already working to advance anti-racism in their institutions. Some of this work was well underway before the pandemic, and others have been adopting new approaches or taking bolder steps in their anti-racism efforts. We look forward to highlighting this work from our colleagues across library sectors in our upcoming issue, Volume 50, Issue 1, *Anti-Racist Action in Libraries*.

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