

## IJIDI: Book Review

Dali, K., & Caidi, N. (Eds.). (2021). *Humanizing LIS education and practice: Diversity and design*. Routledge. ISBN 9780367404499. 179 pp. \$44.95 US - paperback.

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**H**umanizing LIS Education and Practice is an engaging collection of 10 chapters that demonstrate ways in which the Diversity by Design (DbD) concept has been enacted by library and information science (LIS) scholars and practitioners, theoretically, and in the field. Originally conceived by editors Keren Dali and Nadia Caidi, the DbD concept was originally articulated in their 2017 article, “Diversity by Design”. The editors begin this book by republishing that article as a conceptual framework to contextualize the nine chapters that follow.

The text is organized into three parts: Diversity by Design (chapters 1 and 2), DbD in LIS education (chapters 3-6), and DbD in LIS practice (chapters 7-10) as an assemblage of “case studies, practice models, and successful application [of the DbD approach] in LIS higher education and professional practice” (p. 6). Dali and Caidi state that the primary audiences for the book are LIS educators, graduate students, and practitioners, worldwide. Indeed, authors included in the tome are a balanced representation of the LIS field with 10 authors hailing from LIS education (including two who are practitioner doctoral students) and nine authors who are active practitioners in the LIS field. The authors’ research foci derive from diverse interests: Indigenous library services, assistive technologies in libraries, diversity initiatives for LIS professional development, LIS publishing, and accessibility and usability in the LIS classroom, within academic, public, and community-based library settings. Contributors hail from South Africa, Canada, and the United States, offering perspectives on diversity from African, Canadian (including Indigenous), and American lenses. Each chapter presents footnotes and a reference list at its end.

The purpose of *Humanizing LIS Education and Practice* is to demonstrate and promote the diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) concept as more than a discursive idea or trendy best practice, but rather, as an intentional, meaningful, systematic approach for librarians and information professionals living as citizens of a multi-cultured, social world. To that end, Dali and Caidi posit in their introduction that diversity needs to be embedded within LIS on all levels and within all layers, by design. “By design” denotes intentionality and mindful intersectionality.

To punctuate the point, Dali and Caidi author part I of the book to explain their conceptualization and application of their concept of Diversity by Design. In chapter 1, the editors outline the six elements of DbD for LIS education, summarized concisely, as follows:

- 1) LIS instructor awareness of the need for diversity as a fundamental aspect of their pedagogical framework and methodologies,
- 2) LIS faculty and administrative support for a core diversity course as part of the LIS curriculum,
- 3) LIS student awareness, interest, and willingness to connect with diverse people and communities,
- 4) learning-oriented partnerships with community stakeholders that are representative of diverse constituencies,
- 5) a vast array of educational resources and platforms “that facilitate diverse learning styles,” and,
- 6) “the diversity mindset,” which is an articulation and actualization of diversity as a way of life based on a “deep conviction that diversity is not an option: it is integral to social structure, daily interactions, learning environments, professional settings, and human relationships” (p. 16).

Due to the interdisciplinary nature of LIS, Dali and Caidi discuss various ways that DbD could be interpreted and applied. The editors proclaim that as a profession, it is time for LIS to move beyond tokenism and pithy diversity and inclusion statements and policies, to bring the diversity conversation “to the next level” (p. 21) by embracing the diversity we all inherently possess individually, communally, and collectively as a human family, and as information professionals. They state that only when LIS fully appreciates diversity as a naturally present aspect of the discipline and field, and of everyday life, will Diversity by Design become a model fully realized.

In Chapter 2, the editors decree a clarion call for DbD by presenting detailed research outcomes on a study they performed in 2014, where 119 LIS students responded to a survey Dali and Caidi distributed to the 57 North American LIS programs accredited by the American Library Association (ALA). The data, presented in the voices of the respondents, offer an unapologetic appeal for all LIS theoreticians and practitioners to take intentional accountability for exploring the complexities of ways in which we claim and incorporate (or not) our own identity constructions, pedagogical objectives, and practice-focused *raison d'être* towards ourselves, one another, and the cohorts, communities, and constituencies in which we serve.

Authors Kim M. Thompson and Clayton A. Copeland assert in Chapter 3 that LIS educators *can* consistently embrace DbD as they describe their model for inclusive course design which incorporates four principles: andragogy, content, communication, and assessment. The authors discuss and provide concrete examples of how LIS educators can design their courses to incorporate diversity within each of these realms. In Chapter 4, Clara Chu and Jaya Raju state the case that diversity needs to be included in LIS education, by design, in every LIS program, globally. The authors share their research where they performed textual analysis of the websites of LIS schools in Africa to argue that diversity is not just a band-aid fix for LIS education, but more urgently, it is an emic aspect of LIS that must be realized, honored, and lived, starting with inclusive pedagogical approaches in the LIS classroom, transparent diversity prioritizing of LIS professional associations, coupled with identity-construction of LIS faculty, everywhere.

Diane Dechief contributes Chapter 5 where she shares her research into how LIS faculty can apply

DbD on names and naming practices by facilitating in-class activities that engage students to call-name-claim themselves as they want to be identified. Dechief emphasizes that such pedagogical intentions are ever-evolving, always in need of adjustment because such a “diversity mindset” is vital to “enhance class activities with the goals of improving students’ experiences in the classroom and increasing their opportunities to engage with strategies that diminish social inequities and microaggressions” (p. 103). As such, DbD empowers students because “it creates opportunities for students to informally teach peers and instructors” (p. 103).

In Chapter 6, Bharat Mehra offers a critical examination of DbD challenges within the tenure process of LIS academia. This chapter incisively analyzes how the tenure and promotion process in North American LIS academia is toxically intertwined with the political landscape of LIS scholarly publishing practices. Mehra calls to task the “white-ist (white + elitist)” (p. 105) foundations of LIS academia and shares his experience of applying DbD to his tenure and promotion process as a holistic approach to challenging the linear perceptions of the teaching-research-service model within the white-ist LIS academia paradigm.

Chapter 7 opens up part III of the book, which focuses on LIS practice. Laurie Davidson, Kimberly Johnson, and Daniella Levy-Pinto provide an intriguing contribution in Chapter 7 where they explore print accessibility issues within public librarianship where “[a]ccessibility ... entails the identification and removal of barriers, be they physical, technological, procedural, attitudinal, or environmental, which inhibit people’s participation in activities or in daily life” (p. 125). Conveyed from a Canadian context, Davidson, Johnson, and Levy-Pinto’s story about their work with their country’s National Network for Equitable Library Service (NNELS) disrupts traditional notions of accessibility services in libraries. For example, the authors share how the NNELS creates textual content on-demand for patrons with print disabilities, rejecting the model of outsourcing library accessibility services (which perpetuates inequitable access to information). NNELS’s approach and practice illustrates how print accessibility becomes an equitable aspect of library service akin to the benefits of interlibrary loan as an information service amenity.

In Chapter 8, academic librarian Norda Bell declares that challenges in LIS professional conference planning are due to two problematic approaches: “diversity as ‘add-on’” and “diversity as ‘separate, but equal’”. By examining diverse people’s challenging online engagements with LIS conference websites, Bell cites benefits and limitations of conference approaches to diversity, equity, and inclusion. Bell then applies the DbD model to reframe LIS conference planning so that “conference committees can work towards cultivating a diversity mindset” (p. 140) where planners reconsider their understandings to view DEI in all its dimensions, “not solely around representation from POC [people of color]” (p. 141). Bell calls for an intentional approach to conference planning that is inclusive, rather than performative.

Localized within a South African context, Chapter 9 looks at the role of the academic library as an equitable and inclusive publisher of African research. Authors Reggie Raju, Jill Claassen, and Lena Nyahodza contend that the library “as a publishing service is presented as one of the drivers in the disruption of the traditional publishing landscape” (p. 151). They present the University of Cape Town (UCT) Libraries system as a case study to demonstrate the rapid growth of UCT Libraries as a publisher of peer-reviewed and non-peer-reviewed journals, monographs, and textbooks. Since 2015, UCT Libraries has been a library publisher having “contributed to publishing African scholarship using denorthernization [i.e., non-Western/Euro-centric] guidelines” (p. 154) as a relevant demonstration of actualizing Diversity by Design.

In the last chapter of the book, Chapter 10, authors Sharon Farnel, Anne Carr-Wiggin, Kayla Larson, and Kathleen De Long provide an overview of the ways in which the University of Alberta Library in Canada follow an inclusive framework within their strategic plan and actions via various initiatives that are responsive to and inclusive of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit campus community members. Citing successes and critically exploring the challenges of staff development and student-oriented initiatives, the authors ask an important question: “Is decolonization by design truly possible within a colonial setting, or is one simply engaged in retrofitting, placing a veneer of decolonization over a structure that can never be anything but colonial?” (p. 169).

The strength of *Humanizing LIS Education and Practice* is the inclusivity of a diverse group of authors, worldwide, who are LIS scholars and practitioners committed to inclusive work in emically diverse libraries and communities. This inclusivity is also evident in the structure of the book: it is refreshing to see the contributor list at the beginning of the book rather than at the end of the book. This presentation allows readers to immediately connect with the authors as a collective group speaking in one voice.

Each chapter is a strong contribution to the field independently, which makes for an overall robust collection on the topic of diversity, equity, and inclusion in library and information education and services. One weakness of the book is that while Chapter 10 ends with an excellent, monumental question, the question begs to be picked up and discussed across the breadth of all the research and voicedness illustrated throughout the text. As a reader, I turned the page truly anticipating an editors-authored concluding chapter that would cite the text throughout its entirety as evidence to firmly (re)state the case for the urgency and efficacy of Diversity by Design. Such a chapter would not be a reiteration of the introduction, but instead, a discussion where commonalities within the stories told throughout the chapters would be highlighted to signify the six elements of the Diversity by Design method. Notwithstanding this one item on my reader response wish list for this volume, I highly recommend Dali and Caidi’s book to all LIS researchers who are invested in research and practice that propels a progressive conversation on applied diversity theory and practice within the LIS profession, throughout the world.

## References

Dali, K., & Caidi, N. (2017). Diversity by design. *The Library Quarterly*, 87(2), 88-98.

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