LIS's Climate Change:
What LIS Means within a Pandemic and Globalized Social Movement Context

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Editorial

The years of 2020 and 2021 have been, and continue, as of this writing, to be challenging for all of us, no matter our location, identity, beliefs, or occupation. If I were to put a start date on the COVID-19 pandemic, I would say that Friday, March 13, 2020, was a significant day because it was the last time I, and the entire college community of the University of Hawaiʻi, was fully on-campus. By that following Monday, March 16, the U.S. federal government had declared the nation in a state of emergency due to the global quickening of COVID-19; the university and many local, state, and national institutions and commerce shutdown face-to-face meetings for business. Country borders began closing; most U.S. states, as well as countries across the world, were quickly setting travel restrictions. By the end of March 2020, the planet was in "lockdown" with everyone moving online to interact, work, attend school, and participate in social events via virtual platforms and applications such as Zoom, WhatsApp, Instagram, Microsoft Teams, and Google Hangouts. For libraries and other information organizations, work, library programming, and administrative processes moved primarily online: the library environment became distal and virtual.

Given the intensity and uncertainty of our new global context, by April 7, 2020, my youngest daughter and I hurriedly shut down the lease with our rental home in Hawaii, quickly packed books and essential artifacts, borrowed money for our airline tickets, and flew home to Philadelphia, PA. We arrived at a new home to live together with my eldest daughter, who was pregnant for the first time, and with my middle daughter, who was furloughed off a job she'd just started a week earlier. Also, very importantly, I was now five minutes away from my infirmed elderly parents instead of 5,000 miles away. My family was included in the mass exodus–Spring 2020 sent everyone worldwide–home. Once home, daily life became virtual, with many of us stressed out trying to figure out how this thing called COVID-19 was affecting our lives, personally and professionally, immediately and long-term.

As the seasons continued to churn time during 2020, many of us lost loved ones to COVID-19 or were recovering from the contagion ourselves. Somehow, within the midst of this plague, we continued to perform our daily individual and work activities from home. Yet, life and death continued to frame human existence: hospitals everywhere were so infected with the impacts of the COVID-19 virus that patients could only have one support person with them for an entire

hospital stay—no visitors, and once you were in, you could not leave because of COVID-19. Funerals were held via online streaming platforms, with services and rituals modified to reflect the intensity of the pandemic's effects on our human experience. I will never forget the media images of the thousands of people, our fellow human beings, who lost their battle with COVID-19, stacked in piles for burial or cremation. Mass graves overwhelmed societies in every corner of the world. I was panicked by the sheer thought of what our medical, social, and civic frontline fellow citizens (including colleague librarians, archivists, and information professionals) were experiencing daily. I'm sure you were, too.

In addition to all of us suffering an incredible amount of collective grief, we struggled to ensure our own health and survival. I and my entire household contracted the COVID-19 virus in November 2020, during the early holiday season. We'd attended just one event outside of the home, all masks covered, all protocols in place and adhered to, and yet, my entire family pod contracted COVID-19. We had a 5-month-old baby in the household, which is why I can speak with clarity about what was happening in hospitals during the scorching summer of 2020. That summer season was also rife with social justice protests exploding worldwide under the cloudy COVID-19 plague. Protests against police murders and many other kinds of heritage-based brutalities were in response to the ugly scourge of systemic racism that seems to exist everywhere if you are Black, Indigenous, or identifiable of any heritage that is non-European.

Yet, amid these incredibly stressful and historical times, librarians, archivists, and information professionals everywhere adjusted their services to accommodate socially distanced services and online information settings. As the papers in this issue reveal, authors used their downtime to reflect on their professional practices and critically question their work environments' equity. In effect, we, in the library and information science field (LIS), experienced an occupational climate change. This issue presents a collection of research and conceptual papers that report early outcomes and insights from this change. LIS practitioners and scholars continued writing, submitting, and peer-reviewing articles during the lockdown. Here, at the *IJIDI*, COVID forced us, the editorial team, to move gentler with a more measured pace. To honor the new, primarily virtual, at-home context in which we worked, we delayed publication timelines, and production processes became even more inclusive of respecting our lived realities of these challenging times across international time zones. That said, I commend the *IJIDI* editorial team, an incredible group of dedicated librarians, who continue to produce stellar copyediting and production work miraculously, all while experiencing considerable losses in our personal lives; be it that we contracted COVID-19 and became long-haul recovery patients ourselves, gave birth during COVID-19, or lost loved ones due to COVID-19. This pandemic has been unforgiving and relentless for all of us on this planet. No one has been spared from its effects.

During this lockdown, I have been reflecting on this question: "What does it mean to be a LIS practitioner or scholar and be committed to the equitable and inclusive library and information experiences with a diversity of colleagues coming from various countries, cultures, standards, criteria, heritages, and identities, worldwide?" Add the stress of a global epidemic plus global social and racial justice violence and protests to the stew, and well; who we are or who we are "becoming" in this profession of the library and information sciences becomes a vital question for reflection. I believe we are at a tipping point. This summer issue reflects that turn.

For myself, I have been in a deep reflective mode concerning what it means to be Editor of an international, peer-reviewed journal whose focus is equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) during a global pandemic. This reflection comes in response to colleagues harping the words "quality,"

and "scholarship," and "rankings" within the context of peer-reviewed scholarship *during a pandemic*. I have written about the harshness of the LIS stance and have often questioned what it means to approach one another and deal with one another kindlier in LIS—and I do intend the word, *kindlier* (Irvin, 2019). The questions I've asked about how we treat one another in LIS were pre-COVID. Yet, during this grave period of contagion, I still hear harshness, apathy, and malice in the name of quality scholarship and relationship-building in LIS. Perhaps it is stress projecting itself, but within LIS scholarly publishing, I've witnessed decisions made based on personal vendettas and unresolved misunderstandings *within the context of people suffering and dying worldwide from an insidious disease*. The daily creates history—we cannot continue to have bias and prejudice frame how we work together in LIS in 2021 and onward. We. Must. Do. Better. Whether we want to accept it or not, COVID-19 has bonded the entire humanity on this planet as one body. As a collective body, we *must* be kinder, gentler, and more respectful with ourselves and one another—no exceptions.

Of course, I believe in the quality of scholarship; t'is why we do what we do here at the *IJIDI*. Concurrently, I feel the quality of the human connection is most important, which directly informs the "quality" of a paper. We all know that a peer-reviewed article is a collectively composed work where reviewers extend their generosity of intention, knowledge, and spirit to support colleagues' voicedness within their research. I posit that the COVID-19 pandemic has brought us a changing climate, a new normal that makes it requisite for us to be mindful and empathetic regarding ourselves, one another, and our work singly and collectively. Our contribution to the world as librarians, archivists, and information professionals is as the keepers of the experiences, memories, records, and legacies of our communities, everywhere.

Thus, it behooves us to actively support one another's research, writing, and ideas about LIS matters globally. Let's include one another in reading and responding to research. Let's include students and practitioners in meaningful, heart-centered work that can be published from the global west, east, south, and every continent, island, and Indigenous community and tradition. This intersectional and interdisciplinary inclusion means that "quality" isn't necessarily based on the dominant Western canon's hegemonic, systemically problematic legacy in academia. Here at the *IJIDI*, our mission is to support the publication of authentic expressions of research, scholarship, literature reviews, and fieldwork. Thus, the author's voice is centered in the presentation of the work, which means that sometimes "quality" is equally innovative. The double-blind peer-review process employed at the *IJIDI* keeps articles in discourse with contemporary research and scholarship and respects published literature of yesteryear. In other words, the *IJIDI* is committed to making a positive contribution to reframing what "quality" means in an authentically diverse, equitable, and inclusive LIS world. We continuously (re)claim what we say we are, *The International Journal of Information, Diversity, & Inclusion.* Our mission includes caring about what a colleague's work brings to the world to help LIS scholars and practitioners learn more about ourselves and our place in the world as an information community.

To that end, this summer's issue presents a collection of interesting, meaningful, and thoughtful research papers, case studies, and viewpoint articles, covering four regions of the earth with research participants hailing from six countries. We LIS folks have lots to say right now. I am sure our voiced-ness is due to our being home during this pandemic. Lockdown has allowed us to reflect on our information worlds (Jaeger & Burnett, 2010) and then think, write, and contribute our insights and viewpoints about our changing environments within our collegial discourse. Hence, articles in this issue cover our current environmental concerns as a profession: impacts on information practices during COVID, identity constructs resulting from interactions on social

media, critical questions asked of self-styled diversity committees, and ways in which technology continues to disrupt information services for rural communities.

With this common thread about the library's environment, we open our summer issue with a group of research articles that look at the library environment in diverse ways, but all with a call for a change in climate within library (systemic) and librarian (practitioner) intentionalities and services. We lead off with an article by Yanli Li, who conducted a log analysis of two Canadian information use surveys that explore ways in which information about COVID-19 obtained via social media impacts self-perceived mental health for Canadian residents. Li's research reveals that inaccurate information obtained on social media negatively impacts users' mental health, imploring information professionals to be vigilant in providing accurate information services in libraries that may counter what patrons retrieve online. Echoing concerns for the integrity of our services in libraries, Amelia Anderson takes a reflective stance to consider the health of autistic librarians on the job. In her paper, Anderson explores the job-seeking and on-the-job experiences of ten self-identified autistic librarians, the barriers they face in disclosing their status, and suggestions for making the work environment more accessible. In turn, Daniel Ayoung and Pamela Abbott look at the environmental gaps of the accessibility of communication technologies in public library services in a rural community in Ghana. Applying the design-reality gap model, the scholars examine an ICT library initiative to explore how local policymakers and library workers can close the gap between what systems intend for ICTs in rural libraries and the actual practices enacted that may counteract those intentions. Vandana Avasty and Brice Bongiovanni's paper reports results from their research study on women's agency in the open-source software (OSS) field. Employing the theory of gender in their analysis, Avasty and Bongiovanni reported disparities in how "women" and "gender" are defined in OSS in various work environments across the globe.

Lynne Bowker's research is a case study that challenges academic librarians to improve their instructional teaching using machine translation devices as a means of advocating for linguistic diversity. Norda Bell offers a case analysis of archivist job adverts that contribute to a developing typology for diversity statements in LIS to ensure authentic inclusivity in recruitment for a diverse LIS workforce.

The Special Section papers include a literature review by Vanesa Ayon and Andrew Dillon. They posit that assistive technology "focuses on understanding the experience in the educational environment for learners with disabilities" (abstract). Ayon and Dillon analyse literature that considers library settings for users across the lifespan (school media centers, public and academic libraries). They suggest a socio-technical approach to including assistive technologies to build a collaborative educational environment where learners (patrons) and instructors (librarians) authentically learn from one another.

The collection circles back to our current concerns with the social issues that have bannered the past few years: digital equity, particularly with college students, the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic (as of this writing) and the future of libraries, and public safety challenges in libraries during these historic social-justice-oriented times. Frank et al., in their paper, "Digital Equity & Inclusion Strategies for Libraries," report ways that their state university library in Montana sustained and advocated for digital equity and inclusion for undergraduate students during the surge of digital library services in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Frank et al. consider how the pandemic has impacted their university community and the local Native Indian tribe's access to library services within a COVID context. Kim Thompson and Amanda Reed continue the

conversation with their article discussing the future of library services in light of the impacts of COVID-19 on information services at a public library system in the southern U.S. Thompson and Reed use the tripartite information access and digital inclusion model to evaluate patron access to public library services during the pandemic shutdown. They explore the question: how can LIS holistically analyze and evaluate information services to make decisions during times of rapid change? Allie Fry and Jeannie Austin close our issue with a powerful commentary where they identify the problematic nature of how libraries build a relationship with the police to situate the library as a space of surveillance and oppression for the communities they serve, as opposed to being a safe space. Fry and Austin implores librarians to sincerely (re)consider the complicated relationship between public libraries and police departments.

Overall, this summer issue is a timely collection of research, case studies, literature reviews, and analytical commentary that disrupts the library environment as a silo. Collectively, these articles send a message to our field worldwide: librarians, archivists, and information professionals must be active, courageous agents of critical inquiry and equity in response to the social ebbs and flows of our collective world experience. Systemically, diversity and inclusion initiatives in libraries include all of us, patrons, staff, librarians, and administrators: altogether, we are the community. The library is an organic environment situated within the public sphere that acts as a nexus point for information growth and exchange. Collectively, the papers in this issue make the point clear that we, as a global LIS community, are changed and will never be the same: the pandemic has affected our professional identity, work, and services, which we must embrace and continue to evolve.

Lastly, as we continue on with the evolution of the *IJIDI*, with our fifth volume, we have implemented a new feature called *Early Access* that we believe will be a boon for us to publish high-quality research, scholarship, and reports based on a mindful pace that gives us space to work with authors and reviewers with an empathy of care to ensure the best presentations of LIS discourse. In this vein, *Early Access* on the *IJIDI* website will present papers as soon as they pass the double-blind peer review and production process. In this way, the *IJIDI* editorial team will approach the work we enjoy with a graceful latitude for making decisions that ensure quality, scholarship, and discourse. We will continue to give every paper our holistic support for the best in writing, research acumen, and editorial integrity. The *IJIDI* is excited to continue to promote exceptional contributions to LIS discourse that reflect the world's diversity and creativity of scholarship that honors our collective love for libraries, archives, cultures, histories, memories, technologies, and most importantly, our fellow citizens whom we serve.

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