

BOOK REVIEW / CRITIQUE DE LIVRE

Jones SD, Murphy B, editors. **Diversity and inclusion in libraries: a call for action and strategies for success.** Lanham (MD): Rowman & Littlefield; 2019. Softcover: 192 p. ISBN: 978-1-5381-1439-1. Price: USD\$35.00. Available from: <https://rowman.com/ISBN/9781538114391/Diversity-and-Inclusion-in-Libraries-A-Call-to-Action-and-Strategies-for-Success>

Diversity and inclusion (D & I) in librarianship is openly discussed in some library corners, a taboo subject whispered about in some, or is ignored and considered irrelevant and unworthy of discussion in others. Global change in societies around the world however, necessitates a shift in attitudes and perspectives within the profession.

Edited by Shannon D. Jones and Beverly Murphy, *Diversity and inclusion in libraries: a call for action and strategies for success*, explores diversity and inclusion challenges that librarians and libraries face. This collection of essays and sharing of personal experiences aims to increase awareness of and sensitivity to the social, cultural, and educational needs of everyone in the library and information profession. The editors hope the book will appeal to those uninformed, interested in, or who advocate for D & I. It is a call as they state in the preface "...to join us on this journey...not only to increase your... appreciation of diversity and inclusion but more importantly to strengthen those efforts undertaken at your library...and to take action, to acknowledge the beauty in our differences, and to embrace the concept that all voices matter." [1]

This three-part book opens with the preface, acknowledgements, and a context setting introduction by Chris Bourg, Director of Libraries at Massachusetts Institute of Technology, before launching into part one – "Why Diversity and Inclusion Matter." In part two, "Equipping Library Staff," authors share experiences, challenges faced, lessons learned, and practical

strategies for building a library staff equipped with diversity and inclusion insights and skills. Parts one and two take a scholarly approach. The third part, "Voices from the Field" features diverse library professionals' accounts of their work-related experiences with diversity and inclusion issues. The contributors take a refreshingly informal approach in their personal accounts that will appeal to both library school students and practicing professionals alike. Some of the book's chapters open with an overview that tells readers what to expect in subsequent pages. A collaborative and inclusive spirit characterizes the contributions in the 20 chapters of the book.

Parts one and two would appeal most to scholars, library professionals, administrators, leaders, and policy makers. Those seeking more personal accounts may find part three of greater interest, and eye-opening.

Diversity and inclusion in libraries: a call for action and strategies for success is well edited and accessible to all interested in strategies and rationale for increasing diversity in the profession. For those who are new to the subject matter, this book provides insight into the issues, and current challenges that face the profession regarding recruitment, inclusion, and retention of diverse individuals in the profession. At just under 200 pages, it is a short book given the complexity of the subject matter. However, many salient matters are introduced, if not fully examined.

As I read the book it took me back to memories difficult to revisit. As a former library school student, librarian, educator, and library manager of African descent, and having worked in academic, public, and special libraries in Canada and the United States, many of the stories echoed my own experiences. Chapter one was uplifting and provided the foundation and courage I needed for reflection on the more challenging and personally painful sections of the book. The personal accounts in chapter 12, for example, embodied unpleasant and all too common experiences. More uplifting career experiences were shared in chapters 14 and 18. With the candor and perspectives of the various

contributors, the book was a source of validation and optimism.

Jones and Murphy, who share a common interest in D & I, are eminently qualified as editors of this book. They have 58 years of library experience between them and are members of underrepresented populations in the library and information profession. At publication, Jones was the Director of Libraries at the Medical University of South Carolina in Charleston; Murphy, the Assistant Director for Communications and Web Content at the Duke University Medical Center Library & Archives. The biographical sketches of the chapter contributors, usefully arranged at the back of the book, represent a broad range of library types, staff and leadership positions, and geographic locations across the U.S. This lends authenticity, expertise, and knowledge authority to the book's content.

Observations, suggestions, and recommendations abound, some recurring throughout the book. Such repetition may, on the one hand, be regarded as tiresome. On the other hand, it may signal the emerging consensus around diversity and inclusion as a positive goal worthy of individual, professional, and institutional commitment.

Among the wealth of topics that the book covers, what stood out for me includes the ever-evolving definitions of terms commonly used in connection with D & I; the significance of diversity; the gap between ideals and practice; librarianship as an evolving profession in need of more diversity and inclusion; social justice and activism in librarianship; cultural competence; disability in the workplace; and inclusion issues for transgender and gender nonconforming individuals. The book also provides tools for achieving D & I change.

Although many important D & I issues are covered in the book, some readers may find gaps. A notable

absence is a discussion of workplace issues among underrepresented staff of various ethnic backgrounds. The book deals almost exclusively with issues between staff from underrepresented cultures and staff from the dominant culture. Despite this gap, I would have benefitted from reading this book in library school, and as a professional librarian. I would recommend *Diversity and Inclusion in Libraries: a call for action and strategies for success* to library school students, working librarians, educators, administrators, and library human resources personnel not only in the United States, but also in Canada. This book is a welcome addition to the 2014 edited book by Deborah Lee and Mahalakshmi Kumaran, *Aboriginal and visible minority librarians: oral histories from Canada*; in which Indigenous and librarians of colour share their experiences working in libraries in Canada. [2]

There is still much to learn and do regarding D & I in Canadian libraries. Even as we pride ourselves as better than the US in race relations and D & I, the reality is less palatable and uncomfortable. Visible Minorities in Canada (ViMLoc) (<https://vimloc.wordpress.com/>), a collaborative network formed in 2012, continues to support, engage, and mentor minority librarians in Canada.

Diversity and inclusion in libraries: a call for action and strategies for success is a significant addition to the literature and an answer to those who may say that D & I challenges are too difficult to address, or do not exist in the profession. The book also serves as a primer for those who want to learn about D & I in the library profession. Finally, it is an encouraging read for those who want to effect change, implement proven strategies, and strengthen their resolve to open the profession so that it is truly inclusive.

Statement of Competing Interests

No competing interests declared.

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[1] Jones SD, Murphy B. *Diversity and inclusion in libraries: a call for action and strategies for success*. Lanham (MD): Rowman & Littlefield; 2019. xii p.

[2] Lee D, Kumaran, M. *Aboriginal and visible minority librarians: oral histories from Canada*. Lanham (MD): Rowman & Littlefield; 2014.