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Review of Diversity and Inclusion in Libraries: A Call to Action and Strategies for Success.

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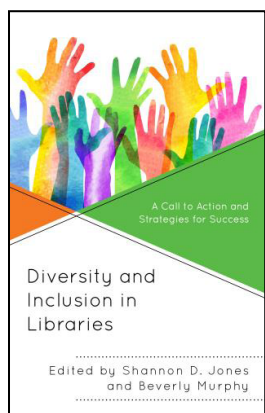


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Book Reviews



Diversity and Inclusion in Libraries: A Call to Action and Strategies for Success. Shannon D. Jones and Beverly Murphy, eds. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2019. 210p. Paper, \$35.00 (ISBN 978-1-5381-1439-1).



We have been talking about diversity and inclusion in the library world for a long time. There have been articles and books written on the subject. There are sessions at conferences. Our communities and our patrons are more diverse, so why hasn't the profession become more diverse? Shannon Jones and Beverly Murphy have addressed the issue of making libraries more diverse and inclusive, taking it head-on with a systematic review of what diversity and inclusion mean for libraries and why they are important. But they don't stop there. They segue into discussions on how to make our libraries and our profession more diverse and inclusive. The book is rounded out by real-life examples, true "voices from the field."

Part I is entitled "Why Diversity and Inclusion Matter." There is a saying that we stand on the shoulders of our ancestors so that we may see farther. This section of the text introduces the readers to some of the African American men and women who were leaders in the fight to diversify the profession, to the history of the research on diversity and inclusion in the field, and to the newer concepts the field struggles with including microaggressions, social justice, and activism. Part I of this text creates the platform for all of us to stand on and see farther.

Now, with a firm foundation on which to build our knowledge, we proceed to part II, "Equipping the Library Staff." This section covers how to work toward becoming more inclusive and diverse in our libraries and as a profession. In the chapter entitled "Leading a Diverse and Inclusive Public Library," Cristina Dominguez Ramirez reminds us that diversity is not black and white. When we talk about diversity, we must include discussion of abilities/disabilities, age, educational differences, gender, people from other nations, the LGBTQ+ communities, local and regional foci, race and ethnicities, and religion.

Part II addresses other issues facing libraries as they attempt to diversify and be more inclusive, including aligning diversity and inclusion strategic planning with the parent organization and recruiting, retaining, and supporting a diverse staff. The chapters in this section use real-world examples with concrete advice for library professionals. I was particularly drawn to the chapter on building cultural competence. As the chapter's author, Chandra Walker, writes, we talk a lot about the need for cultural competency, but how do we achieve that goal? As the author notes, there have been improvements in the realm of LIS education. Walker's clearly outlined and designed course to enlighten professional librarians can be an option or a model for anyone who hopes to introduce or increase cultural competency in their organization.

Building on the illustrations in the previous chapters, part III, "Voices from the Field," librarians from underrepresented groups share their personal stories of wins and losses,

of highs and lows. (A special shoutout to kYmberly Keeton, whose powerful story I knew and was so happy that she shared in this book!) As a woman of color, I found that reading about the journeys of other librarians from underrepresented groups was empowering. I learned more about the struggles that transgender students experience, as well as the hurdles faced by folks who are differently abled or are large of stature.

Underrepresented and marginalized people have always fought oppression. But we bonded together to move our libraries and the library profession forward. As Young and Donovan detail in their chapter “From Whence We Came,” our library ancestors took the fight directly to the American Library Association to “ensure that everyone has the same level of equality, access, retention, and advancement” and stayed “vigilant when sexism, racism, ageism, and so forth jeopardized hard-won inroads.” And we know the work is not complete. That is why this book is so essential. For those of us doing the work of diversity and inclusion as well as for allies and those who want to take up the banner of diversity and inclusion in our libraries, it is all at once a how-to manual, a foundational text, and a rallying cry.

As library professionals, it is our duty to support our library patrons and library employees and to live the principles of the Library Bill of Rights, which asks us to serve all equally and to provide information impartially. The library profession started in a time when racial and other prejudice was not only rampant but often legally supported. This book reminds us that, though we might have started off a bit shaky, we are stronger together. —*Kelli Johnson, Marshall University*