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Cover Page Footnote

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Peer Reviewed Article

Seeking an Intentional Crossroads: Working
Towards an Understanding of
Community Building in Hawai'i Public Libraries

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Abstract

Public libraries in Hawai'i serve one of the most diverse populations in the United States. With 51 branch locations across six islands, Hawaii's public libraries are central hubs for citizens, where community building can take place. This paper seeks to explore ways in which community building takes place at public libraries in Hawai'i. Through on-site visits at public libraries, observations of training sessions of participants of a Hawai'i-based public library professional development program (Hui 'Ekolu), and informal interviews with local public library patrons, key themes, reflections and analysis convey a common question across all groups: "What is a Native Hawaiian Library?" "What is Hawaiian librarianship?" This research is at an emerging stage where such meaningful questions are pointing towards a need to center Indigenous Hawaiian ways of knowing and perceiving public services in libraries as a primary tenet of cultural competence for public library workers in Hawai'i. As a federally funded grant program, Hui 'Ekolu is an innovative opportunity to explore questions that emerge as an inquiry-based approach to determining what professional learning and development can look like within place-based contexts.

Keywords: collaboration, community building, Hawai'i, professional practice, public libraries

Clearing and Claiming the Space

It is vital that we claim space within this writing to clarify and confirm protocols and concepts that we are accountable for and that we speak fluently with, as Hawai'i residents living, with

permission from the *'aina* (land) to do and share this work. Our approach to re-searching,

re-understanding, and re-discovering public librarianship as identity-, practice-, and service-based is founded on ancient tradition within the



profession of library science itself, and, as human beings accountable to our own ancestral heritages and legacies contextualized within the land on which we live and perform our vocation as librarians, researchers, students, and scholars.

Thus, we also acknowledge our mentors and elders within Hawaiian and Hawai'i-based LIS tradition: Mahealani Meyer, founding librarian of the Native Hawaiian Library of ALU LIKE, INC., Diane Nahl, LIS professor emeritus, third-generation born and raised in Hawai'i, and, all *kupuna* (elder) public librarians who have served in Hawai'i for over four decades: some have retired, some have transitioned, and some, are still available at a public library near you, if you live in Hawai'i, with one public librarian just recently retiring, at 93 years of age.

With such dedication and commitment to public library services in Hawai'i, we newer generation librarians, a widely diverse crew, acknowledge and honor our *kuleana* (responsibility) to ask ourselves deep questions to explore and discover what it means to offer culturally relevant, respectful, and competent library services to Indigenous Hawaiian (*Kanaka Maoli*), Polynesian, local, and residential members of the human community residing within the state of Hawai'i, in the United States. Throughout this paper, we readily identify and discuss the Indigenous Hawaiian community, following the expressed knowledge paradigms of renowned Indigenous scholars: Martin Nakata, Shawn Wilson, and Manulani Aluli-Meyer.¹

Defining Community Building

Public libraries are typically located in communities where information needs, public services and events are diverse. Such diverse information needs when navigated through public library services promote or heighten citizens' sense of building connections with one another and oftentimes, local groups and organizations. When

community building takes place in public libraries, such engagement offers individuals an opportunity to enhance their experience of being a reciprocal, productive part of contributing to a collaborative ontology that further defines a community's knowledge-based system.² Taking inspiration from Gruber's idea of knowledge-based systems being "based on heterogeneous hardware platforms, programming languages, and network protocols",³ we can translate the ontology of citizen participation in public libraries as a contribution to building community culture because culture, too, is based on plurality coming from multiple people, groups and locations (i.e. platforms). Such socio-cultural interactions communicate a common "way" of language, and "doing" that enacts protocols unique and specific to the group or community. Thus, community building in public libraries is a vital engagement towards the knowledge base of a community.

The opportunity to explore what "community building" means for public libraries in Hawai'i involved understanding culture and citizen involvement is very place-based towards the Indigenous context of Hawai'i.⁴ A place-based framework for community building was enhanced due to a unique chance to observe and participate in a professional development program called *Hui 'Ekolu* (which means "three groups" in Hawaiian). *Hui 'Ekolu's* mission was to bring together three library and information science groups for the purpose of exploring creation of an Indigenous model of LIS professional development. The three groups gathered covered three stages of the LIS career: pre-service librarians as graduate students of the University of Hawai'i LIS Program, public library paraprofessionals from Hawai'i's Indigenous public library system, the Native Hawaiian Library of ALU LIKE, INC., and professionals - branch managers from Hawai'i's municipal public library system, the Hawai'i State Public Library System (HSPLS). As a member of the pre-



service group it was imperative to examine the two institutions, ALU LIKE and HSPLS, from a participant observer lens in order to examine what community building looks like in public libraries across Hawai'i.

An important comparison to make was to examine their mission statements to find common ground between ALU LIKE and HSPLS. The mission statements provided by both these institutions are similar, yet different. For example, ALU LIKE's mission is to "extend help" to Hawaiian Natives, "To kōkua Hawaiian Natives who are committed to achieving their potential for themselves, their families and communities",⁵ while the HSPLS aims to "nurture" - "The Hawaii State Public Library System nurtures a lifelong love of reading and learning through its staff, collections, programs, services, and physical and virtual spaces".⁶ While ALU LIKE is specific in *who* it is they are providing services for, the HSPLS is specific in *how* it wants to provide library services. By unpacking these statements, especially ALU LIKE's, one can get a closer idea on what community building at public libraries in Hawai'i could look like. ALU LIKE's framework points to the ideal that by focusing on individuals, their families, and communities as a whole, public library staff can begin to survey and collaborate with patrons and institutional neighbors to facilitate discussion on what community building will look like at the neighborhood library.

Hawai'i's cultural context is Indigenous. *Kanaka Maoli* (Native Hawaiians) have lived throughout the Hawaiian Islands since at least 1200 A.D.⁷ Hawaiian indigeneity was disrupted with "the great distress"⁸ of their first European contact via British Captain Cook in 1778. Through the centuries to present day, this disruption has resulted in a marginalization of Hawaiian knowledge, cultural protocols, and social processes. In library world, particularly for public libraries, the idea of Hawaiian information needs has been little researched. Case in point, a

search in the University of Hawai'i's OPAC for the subject heading "Public libraries -- Hawaii" yields just 53 results dating from 1974 - 2014, with just one entry being published in 1991- an issue of the peer-reviewed American history publication, *Journal of the West*. An EBSCOHost search for "hawaii" AND "public libraries" reveals that for the past two decades, articles about public libraries in Hawai'i do not lean towards research into library professional practices, information services, or Hawaiian or local community needs, but rather, are articles are typically news items to note developments and achievements in technological services within the Hawai'i State Public Library System (HSPLS).

Thus, our research, we feel, is necessary to share a narrative of what is happening (or not happening) with addressing and meeting the Hawaiian community's information needs and services in Hawai'i's public libraries. We feel our work is important because considerations for the information needs of Indigenous people in Hawai'i have been long muted. Our work with the Hui 'Ekolu professional development program conveys that such consideration for community needs in public libraries must begin with the librarians and library workers themselves. In this paper, we are interested in conveying questions asked and explored concerning attention paid to servicing the unique and specific community information needs of the *Kanaka Maoli*. With respect to working within an Indigenous context in Hawai'i, our conceptual framework for guiding our collaborative work comes from a synthesis of understanding LIS *community engagement* in Indigenous contexts, application of *Indigenous research paradigms* to public library services, *reflective practitioner inquiry*.



Literature Review

LIS Community Engagement in Indigenous Contexts

In library science conversations about information needs and community engagement of Indigenous communities, much of the literature on Indigenous knowledge and how to incorporate that knowledge into a Western modeled thought process, centers on understanding the differences between Indigenous methodology and western methodology and then applying the nuances of the knowledge gained to actual professional practices.⁹

However, Mestre shows data that demonstrates that, although librarians may intellectually understand the concept of being open to diverse cultures and looking through the lens of different perspectives, such understanding has not moved past a passive subjective acknowledgment.¹⁰ Similar conclusions can be found, albeit through a different topic, on Western Knowledge Organization Systems (KOS) for Hawaiian knowledge created by Indigenous people. Matsuda found that although KOS exist, they are not meant for Hawaiians but mainly designed for the practicality of librarian practices.¹¹ While Matsuda confirms the importance in having uniformity, for Hawaiian communities, KOS without Hawaiian knowledge and terms becomes unusable because within Hawaiian cultural mores, obtaining input and direction from the community during project development is vital.

Although American public libraries have made strides to be inclusive of diverse cultural representations in their collections, programs, and services, Becvar and Srinivasan show that such culturally responsive methods are still based on Western notions of access and engagement, which are antithetical to traditional, Indigenous perceptions of community-based information services.¹² Becvar and Srinivasan posit that in In-

igenous traditions, access is not necessarily always open, nor necessarily always free, as is typical for Western-designed public libraries.

Similarly, Blackburn found that providing community engagement with Indigenous communities at libraries failed to show positive results.¹³ Though there are similarities in the vision of libraries and Indigenous cultures, creating a program or interactive community event between the two is not so clear cut.

Where libraries can learn to work together with Indigenous communities is to draw from their educational counterparts who are conducting research in school media centers. For example, Harada examines how a group of K-12 public school teachers in Hawai'i incorporates Native teaching methods in order to build a sense of community and belonging for students, through place-based learning.¹⁴ Likewise, this concept of place-based learning can be utilized in community building within Hawai'i-based public libraries: both ideas center on building a "group identity in which learners become part of a community larger than their own."¹⁵

Another approach that public libraries in Hawai'i can draw from is the library work done within the Native Hawaiian private school system, Kamehameha Schools (KS). Nalani Nāluai describes how KS librarians infused Hawaiian values and traditions into the school curriculum through the use of proverbs and words translated into actions instead of definitions, to help students connect to cultural concepts and values.¹⁶ While school media centers and public libraries each have their own specific community to serve, by virtue of them both being educational spaces (school is formalized education, public libraries are informal educational spaces) by incorporating and applying Indigenous knowledge and practices, a sense of community and belonging can be built. In turn, a sense of Indigenous library practices can be normalized



and codified as a protocol for culturally competent library and information practices and services for Native Hawaiian patrons and communities.

Ladson-Billings reflects on the sustainability and misconceptions of culturally relevant pedagogy which has been misused and discusses how many practitioners (teachers) seem “stuck in very limited and superficial notions of culture.”¹⁷ Having an expansive knowledge of culture as a teacher has mostly achieved nothing and instead has reduced the concept of “culture” into a mere activity or enacting of buzzwords. Taking into account Ladson-Billings’ warnings, it is imperative that as educators and librarians, we think about the concepts of “diversity” and “culturally relevant” not as a single racial or ethnic group, but as a global identity to adapt to the fluidity and complexity of the world.¹⁸

Although Ladson-Billings focuses on linguistics and teaching, the data, theory, pedagogy, and programs she discusses are relevant to all educational professionals, including community-based, public librarians. In order to help early-career and experienced librarians to become more culturally-appropriate practitioners, methodologies need to be developed that allow librarians to critique the privileges and advantages of the mainstream as well as to center authentic local, native, and community-driven socio-cultural services and needs within the library.¹⁹

According to Burns, Doyle, Joseph, and Krebs, such a critical approach to public librarianship allows professionals to analyze the efficacy of equitable access as a method towards accommodating Indigenous peoples’ information needs, and centering those needs within their own place-based contexts.²⁰ In turn, Patterson looks at Indigenous librarianship with a global perspective and identifies that a prevalent concern for Indigenous libraries is how to address the

preservation of cultural and sacred artifacts. Both Burns, et al. and Patterson point towards inclusion of Indigenous peoples in the creation of public service methodologies, programs, and protocols, but fail to provide successful examples in public libraries where Indigenous people are included in decisions pertaining to designing and building library spaces, collections, and services that meets their informational needs.²¹

Indigenous approaches to public library services

A recurring theme within Indigenous considerations for LIS research is the lack of collaboration between Indigenous people and Western institutions. Nakata and Hart both examine Western research paradigms and how a lack of minority perspectives is prevalent in Western-centric approaches to collaborative work and inquiry.²² Though the focus on these two studies are on incorporating and/or centering Indigenous knowledge systems within information contexts, the same thought process can be applied to community building as a means of “triangulation of meaning.”

This *triangulation of meaning*, as identified by Aluli-Meyer, supports Hart’s position that indigenous methodologies are characterized as being a collective where it is inherent for people to reciprocate interactions and activities, be accountable for one another, utilize knowledge gained practically, and to review and reflect with other Indigenous peoples to strengthen Indigenous knowledge and practices.²³ Though the concept of infusing Indigenous knowledge into mainstream thought and practice seems to be a consensus among researchers, studies have found that this is much harder to accomplish in the real world. The reasoning for this is not made clear from the various studies in this paper except for the fact that Indigenous knowledge was used without collaboration from Indigenous people, and instead was based on researchers’ own understanding of Indigenous knowledge.



When looking at examples from around the world, many researchers found that it was a challenge to find a methodology that worked with both Indigenous and Western worldviews. Kurtz, in particular, found that setting long-term goals, creating relationships with elders, and sharing knowledge was key to success in creating an Indigenous methodology.²⁴ However, with that said, research by Blackburn showed that engagement with the Aboriginal community and creating exhibits and programs incorporating Indigenous cooperation failed to show concrete data that engagement with Indigenous people rose at public libraries.²⁵ The lack of engagement or qualitative field data could be due to the fact that the initiative was unsustainable as discussed by Blackburn due to varying circumstances such as the inflexibility of libraries and its staff compared to its community, and to the size of the “target community.”²⁶ The lack of concrete data can also be attributed to the fact that Indigenous people do not use or engage with the public library in a Western form, which generally relies on circulation statistics. “Use” of library can be in various ways in place-based communities - ways that are not typically documented or “counted” as actual library use. Instead of relying on data that fits a Western mold, it may be time to figure out what type of socially- and culturally-based information needs to be collected in order for librarians and administrators to gather authentic and true narratives on library usage for Indigenous communities and count those non-traditional activities as actual outcomes that can serve as factors for heightened funding for community-specific resources, staff, and services.

Though there may not have been clear evidence of success in Blackburn’s study, Oliveira shows the “effortlessness with which Kanaka scholars are able to marry their academic scholarship with their customary practices and traditions” proving that cultural narratives and inherited knowledge is valid and necessary discourse for

theoretical spaces and also within communities of practice.²⁷ Oliveira provides numerous examples of how Indigenous knowledge is applied to scholarly discourse; from weaving metaphors into scholarly writing, to using Hawaiian story (in varied forms of legends, mythologies, histories, and proverbs) as a methodological approach to research, and investment in relationship building “community of scholars” where people come together to discuss ideas and expand their horizons, even when the collaborative efforts are challenging.²⁸ Applying these concepts and methodologies to library collections, programs, and missions can provide a base to start creating a library community that is honoring both Indigenous and Western styles of life. The start of such a community begins with library workers at all levels: pre-service, paraprofessional, professional, and administrative.

Within an Indigenous, place-based context, like Hawai’i, community building for public libraries must begin with library staff members because invariably, as island residents, the staff are by default members of the very communities in which they serve. Library staff identity, agency and situated-ness begs the question: “What is Hawaiian librarianship?” This question is being explored via a professional and cultural development program for public librarians in Hawai’i, called *Hui ‘Eko* (<http://www.hui-ekolu.org>). Given the unique and specific social and cultural norms of Indigenous societies, the question infers a secondary question: “What is a Native Hawaiian library?” This question is important because if traditional municipal public library systems are not engaging the Indigenous public, then we must determine what “library” means beyond the typical Western model.

Improving library services and community building go hand in hand. The joint effort between UHM LIS, ALU LIKE, and the HSPLS (as aforementioned) sways the institutions to intrinsically learn from one another. The focus for



ALU LIKE is to figure out what resources and practices they can take from the HSPLS to incorporate it into their community programs and for the HSPLS to be more proactive and humbly engaged to share resources with the Indigenous library community. UHM LIS students operate as the data gatherers and synthesizers, to observe and participate Through the use of an online platform that allows for 24/7 asynchronous communication and information sharing (*Slack*) *Hui 'Ekolu* aims to create a multi-modal professional development model that create ongoing space for collaborative librarianship online, face-to-face, and in the field.

Practitioner Inquiry in Librarian Communities of Practice

Following the reflective approaches of practitioner inquiry pioneers Cochran-Smith and Lytle, *Hui 'Ekolu* incorporates *Slack* as a platform where participants from the “three groups” can share and exchange experiences, observations, artifacts, and reflections from their daily professional practices. In this vein, UHM LIS students learn ways in which library science and practice are synthesized in the field, activities ALU LIKE paraprofessionals create and offer to Native Hawaiian community members who use the Native Hawaiian Library, and public librarians of HSPLS working with the local reading public in Hawai'i.²⁹ Thus, in the fashion of practitioner inquiry for educators, *Hui 'Ekolu* is an exploration of librarian question building for the purpose of librarian community building. Participants are asked questions about LIS in Hawai'i, which brings more questions from the participants themselves, which inspires reflective conversations about Hawaiian culture, history, and heritage, which further strengthens mutual understanding of cultural meaning with the context of Hawai'i, for all involved.³⁰

Hui 'Ekolu Methodology & Design

For this work, two UHM LIS students participated in *Hui 'Ekolu* for one academic semester, enrolled in an independent study course with the *Hui 'Ekolu* principal investigator as Instructor. This paper is a collaborative reportage of one student's ethnographic, inquiry-based research of public library practices, understanding, and approaches to community building, alongside Indigenous ways of enacting information services to the Hawaiian public. This research took a naturalistic observation approach: students as participant-observers, witnessed and documented social actions as they occurred naturally, and as covert participants who jumped in and out of activities and interactions with people, “witnessing and documenting social life as it occurred.”³¹ The students approached their library visits, training attendance, and online observations of discourse within *Hui 'Ekolu*, from a holistic approach in honor and respect to the Indigenous context and culture of Hawai'i where “body, mind, and spirit [served] as a template in which to organize meaningful research.”³²

Students alongside the Instructor, further triangulated meaning from the wholistic approach to research methodology following Aluli-Meyer's body, mind, spirit framework via: objective/empirical observations (the body) during field visits to public libraries and attendance and participation in one *Hui 'Ekolu* training session, and collaborative reflection “offered through conscious subjectivity (mind)” during group discussions on *Slack*, and “through recognition and engagement with deeper realities (spirit)” during intensive data analysis and collaborative (re)reading and (re)writing process (via Google Docs) that we engaged in to compose this story for publication.³³

Field visits and access to public libraries were conscientiously done through “the patron stance” due to the fact that even as LIS people, we carry multiple identities towards libraries: as



an LIS student and at the same time an HSPLS staff member, as an LIS researcher and faculty person, and as a reference librarian in an academic library as opposed to a public library.³⁴ Interaction with library staff was kept to a minimum and the focus was on observation of library activities and informal interviews with patrons. From face-to-face training sessions, a better understanding of needs and wants was made apparent through small group discussions. The transition from a physical meeting space to a virtual one on Slack has seen its growing pains with not as much activity being visible, at least for the Waianae cohort.

This research started as an assignment for the LIS student member of this writing team who was a graduate library and information science student at University of Hawai'i. The course was an independent study set up in conjunction with the IMLS-funded librarian professional development program called *Hui 'Ekolu*, whose work brings native, student, and public librarians together for professional and cultural development.³³ Introduction to *Hui 'Ekolu* began at a two-day training session where nine *hu*is (groups) of native and public librarians collaborated to gain library training from a Hawaiian point of view as the training was facilitated by the Hawaiian LIS professional association, *Na' Hawai'i Imi Loa* (NHIL, pronounced, "nil").

The first training took place as a half-session on a Friday evening from 5:30 PM to 8:00 PM and the second session took place as a full-day session the next day, Saturday, from 8:00 AM to 5:00 PM. The *hui* (groups) reconvened on the second day of training to better address issues that arose in communication compatibility. During this time, LIS students joined a *hui* to truly make the program, *hui 'ekolu*, meaning "group of three" in Hawaiian.

Within indigenous contexts, group events and activities are typically "opened" according to cultural protocol that pays homage to spirit, the

ancestors, and universal guidance to fortify the gathering space. Thus, *Hui 'Ekolu* training was opened with a group '*oli* (chant), led by NHIL facilitators, sung in Hawaiian. During the course of the NHIL training, notes and discussion took place with reflection pieces written out to summarize thoughts, feelings, and knowledge gained. Physical activities were also included, as indigenous work incorporates physical work alongside intellectual work guided by spirit.³⁵ Slack was the main form of communication used during this project and the channels were spread out in an easy to understand manner. Three public channels were created for all participants to access. The channels were named, *#ohana*, *#talkstory-resources*, and *#coolstuff* where participants could post nearly anything. Each cohort (*hui*) was also given their own private channel where they could share ideas and tips as well as technical, cultural, and professional knowledge. Lastly, there were direct messages (DMs) as well to keep conversations private if need be.

Library visits were conducted throughout the semester with the first taking place on Thursday January 24, 2019, from 10:00 AM to 12:00 PM at the Waianae Public Library. The second visit took place at Waimanalo Public and School Library on February 15, 2019, from 10:00 AM to 12:00 PM. Casual conversations with patrons were held at both sites and talks flowed in whatever direction the patron desired.

Data Analysis

Observations from field visits yielded similar results at both branches, particularly in regard to programming. There was no display easily noticeable on what events were being held either by being too cluttered or too sparse. Upon further investigation, it was found that most programming was displayed online but little mention was made at a physical location. Perusing the HSPLS's online website, it was found that there was a dynamic and engaging program that had the HSPLS working with the Music for Life



Foundation. This music program allowed several public libraries to lend ukuleles to the public, free of charge. This program could have been a big event and prime community building program at Hawai'i libraries, but why it wasn't advertised inside the library was perplexing.

Other noticeable observations were the use of computers at both libraries. There was heavy usage at both sites, and it was visible that some patrons struggled when typing and using the computer. A study by Patricia Overall shows that common situations at libraries is patrons lacking keyboard ability, site format knowledge and basic computer literacy skills.³⁶ Although this statistic is well documented, it is interesting to see that there was no signage for computer help or programs and classes that dealt with basic computer knowledge being displayed. It would seem that this could be a great start in networking and community building with the patrons that use the library for its computer and internet.

Surprisingly, informal interviews at both sites were initiated by patrons while conducting walkthroughs around the library. The conversations were natural and began with interest on what was being examined at the time. The main points in discussions with the two patrons was that they both genuinely enjoyed visiting the library as it was a place easy to relax in due to the air conditioner and overall friendly staff. Neither mentioned the borrowing of books but viewed the library as a place to be at, sort of like a second home. The interviews brought up further questions on what a library means to these patrons and possibly this community at a larger scale. Is it a place where one can borrow and read books and find information or is it something more, like a gathering place for neighbors, family, and friends.

Since the movement to an online platform after the conclusion of the training program for Hui 'Ekolu, participation has been sparse on the

open channels in Slack. For the Waianae cohort, this lack of use also extends to the private channel as well. Irvin and Reile showed that at the beginning, librarians rarely responded or contributed to discussions on Slack and instead only read posts and through their data, indicated that it takes roughly four months to "establish a sustainable community."³⁷ The Slack channel for Hui 'Ekolu follows a similar pattern as it had plenty of discussion since its inception in August 2018 when channels were first created, but since then, postings have started to taper off. Posts in all channels have not had much activity since January 2019.

Sifting through the data results and literature revealed a few themes/keywords. Through the use of Voyant Tools (<https://voyant-tools.org/>), a textual analysis was made on keywords that appeared frequently. The results varied from piece to piece, but the most common words that came up constantly were, people/kanaka/Indigenous, community, and knowledge. These three terms also popped up quite a bit at the Hui 'Ekolu training session, especially the term *'ike*, which translates to knowledge. By synthesizing these three terms it is feasible to begin pondering on what constitutes community building in libraries across Hawai'i. It needs to have input from the people and community, and then to use those ideas or *'ike* to bring about a program or collection that reflects the community. The main point that shouldn't be forgotten is to include everyone in the conversation, meaning that outreach and surveys of the community need to be done thoroughly to not miss the views of the minority. As much of the literature states in this paper, taking input from the community and actually acting upon it is the key to success in creating a community building initiative at local libraries in Hawai'i that adhere to both Western and Indigenous methodologies.



Discussion and Conclusion

Overall, channel participation has been sparse in the public channels with activity peaking at a few posts a month along with a response or two. Private channel use may have varied depending on the groups but for the Waianae hui there has been none since the second training session held in January. For interviews, the main focus for the patrons was on public space and comfort. Both patrons were vividly estatic on the “free stuff” that the library provided like the newspaper, magazines, and great AC. The patron at the Waimanalo public library specifically mentioned how awesome the displays at the entrance were. Particularly the I Spy display as it was interactive, and they personally felt that it fit the vibe of being both a public and school library.

Early results show that the data patterns and keywords that emerged from library staff and Hui 'Ekolu was disconnected from what was observed on-site at public libraries. A more in-depth look behind the scenes or more field visits and conversations with patrons may prove otherwise, but to the public eye, there was much to be desired. A question that emerged from the analysis was why a decision was made to only post programs online. Was this done to curb the amount of participants, make it more accessible and viewable, or a decision made based off the community?

Additionally, trends for librarians and ALU LIKE staff using Slack has seen its ups and downs. The three open channels are the least used, and the private channel (the Waianae hui) had seen heavy usage until the beginning of the year. DMs are a data point that should be looked into to see how comfortable members are when

discussing topics in DMs versus open and private channels. Per discussions through stakeholders and members of Hui 'Ekolu, it was found that more facilitation, discussions, and scheduled meeting times on Slack would prove useful to get more activity on the platform.

Lessons taken away from the Hui 'Ekolu meeting centered around the question, what does a Hawaiian library look like? Through on-site visits at public libraries, observations of training sessions of participants of a Hawai'i-based public library professional development program (*Hui 'Ekolu*), and informal interviews with local public library patrons, key themes, reflections and analysis convey a common question across all groups: “What is a Native Hawaiian Library?” “What is Hawaiian librarianship?” This research is at an emerging stage where such meaningful questions are pointing towards a need to center Indigenous Hawaiian ways of knowing and perceiving public services in libraries as a primary tenet of cultural competence for public library workers in Hawai'i. As a federally funded grant program, *Hui 'Ekolu* is an innovative opportunity to explore questions that emerge as an inquiry-based approach to determining what professional learning and development can look like within place-based contexts.

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⁶ ALU LIKE, Inc. "Purpose." <https://www.alu-like.org/about-us/purpose/>

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