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## A New Season: Announcement of Special Issue and Publication Changes

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## A New Season: Announcement of Special Issue and Publication Changes

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In December 2020, the previous editors of *Collaborative Librarianship*, Jill Emery and Michael Levine-Clark, stepped down after a long period of service to the journal. We (Chris Robinson-Nkongola and Carrie Forbes) appreciate their assistance in the publication of this issue. We could not have completed it without them. We are grateful to have the opportunity to lead the journal in new directions. As new co-editors of this open access, peer-reviewed journal, we decided to pause the publishing of the journal for 2021 to devote our attention to a special issue on equity, diversity and inclusion (EDI) and to reevaluate existing journal policies and procedures. Starting with this special issue, *Collaborative Librarianship* will now be published twice a year, instead of quarterly. We have learned from the many challenges and experiences of this past year. We cannot gauge whether these experiences are “normal” or the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. However, as our tenure as co-editors continues, we hope to gain more wisdom from the shared experiences of our authors, the editorial board, and our peer-reviewers.

Many events occurred in 2020 that caused the world to pivot and adapt to what has been called the “new normal.” As a result of these circumstances that occurred in 2020, *Collaborative Librarianship* has devoted this special issue to topics of EDI. In January and February 2020, the world watched the global movement of COVID-19. Global travel was restricted. The World Health Organization (WHO) declared a “public health emergency of international concern

(PHEIC) over the global outbreak of novel coronavirus” on January 30, 2020.<sup>1</sup> By mid-March, most universities and public schools had transitioned to online classes. Businesses, public schools, libraries, and universities discovered ways to work remotely. Grocery stores and some doctors’ offices were the only places anyone could go outside of their homes. In many cases, these places had limited hours. While the world adjusted to living in quarantine, the world witnessed the murder of George Floyd by the hands of police.

Combined with the devastation of a global pandemic on African American communities, Black people witnessed police violence. These events sparked protests from Black Lives Matter activists as well as others. As a response to the murder of Floyd, some colleges and universities made official statements speaking against police brutality and racism. Unfortunately, some higher education institutions and university libraries remained quiet. Despite the one percent gain in racial and ethnic librarians in a ten-year period as well as the American Library Association’s assertion that “diversity is a fundamental value of the association,” library staff of color still face daily challenges in the workplace based on their race and ethnicity.<sup>2</sup> In addition to the racial issues in the workplace, library staff of color grapple with societal issues. They cannot forget or turn off the effects of racism they experience while on or off the job. However, very few libraries allow them to express their feelings



about the racism and microaggressions they witness or personally experience. Despite libraries and universities' workshops, programs, and diversity statements, support for library staff of color has not been translating into real change. This special issue focuses on librarians and staff in a variety of organizations doing the hard and necessary work to begin to transform library spaces into truly equitable, diverse, and inclusive environments.

The issue begins with a column by Raymond Pun and Hiromi Kubo reflecting on their experiences with EDI work in libraries and the urgent need for more proactive collaboration in these efforts.

The From the Field pieces represent a broad range of experiences in library EDI work from creating safe spaces for dialogue for staff of color to addressing retention and promotion of librarians of color to engaging in reparative resource description.

The University of California San Diego (UCSD), library staff of color have created the Library Community Collective (LCC). The authors of the "Library Community Collective: Advocating for Social Justice through Community Conversations" created the LCC to address the concerns of racial minorities who did not have a platform to express how racism impacts them. As a response to the police violence occurring against people of color, UCSD Libraries staff have created a safe space for staff of color to freely speak about racism and to gain support from others who share their experiences.

Janet M. Reid and Patricia D. Sobczak address the retention and promotion of librarians of color via mentorship in their article, "Challenging the Glass Ceiling: Collaboration as the Key to Increasing the Number of Librarians of Color in Academic Libraries." Reid and Sobczak used mentorship as a form of collaboration and have identified it as the key to increasing the number

and the retention of librarians of color in academic libraries.

Systems of library and archival resource description have historically reinforced the societal power structures of white supremacy, patriarchy, and cis-heteronormativity. Following the framework of critical librarianship in the article "Ethical and Anti-Oppressive Metadata," the librarians and staff at George Mason University Libraries' Metadata Services (MS) and Special Collections Research Center (SCRC) have been engaging in a variety of projects related to reparative resource description. Acknowledging their positionality as predominately white departments, they have formed a working group to identify existing harmful and biased language in resource description within their library systems and have worked to deploy more inclusive alternative language.

This issue's peer-reviewed articles address how library workers in different types of library organizations are working together to address racial inequities. In the first article, librarians at the Ohio State University (OSU) Libraries describe one approach to addressing the racial violence that is occurring within our larger society. In their article, "Amplifying Antiracism Resources through Intra-University Collaboration," the authors share how they teamed up with the Ohio State University Office of Diversity and Inclusion (ODI) to create antiracism book lists and research guides. Additionally, they updated their collection development strategies "to support campus-wide antiracism educational opportunities."

For libraries to be equitable spaces for both patrons and staff, it is necessary that equity be a shared, collaborative goal. In "Tackling Organizational Equity at Scale: An Academic Library Consortium Responds," the authors detail the myriad ways the Orbis Cascade Alliance, a regional academic library consortium, has responded to the growing and long-standing need



to address equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) in library spaces and organizations. Furthering this discussion, Francesca Marineo, Chelsea Heinbach, and Rosan Mitola from the University of Nevada, Las Vegas note that equity and inclusion work in libraries has historically fallen disproportionately to Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) library workers. Their article explores how they are countering this injustice by forming an inclusive teaching community of practice with members of their instruction department in order “to foster a culture of discussing inequity in higher education, to develop and implement inclusive teaching practices, and to cultivate a shared responsibility to be equitable instructors and colleagues.”

The final article of the issue discusses the Prince George’s County Memorial Library System’s (PGCMLS) long-standing partnership with the county’s human rights education and enforcement agency, the Office of Human Rights (PGCOHR), formerly the Prince George’s County Human Relations Commission (PGCHRC). The two agencies serve over 967,000 Prince Georgians, a majority-Black (64.4%) and Latin or Hispanic (19.5%) population with a sizable immigrant community (22.7%). The authors

outline the agencies’ innovative model for collaborative community programming, which has dramatically expanded the scope and impact of their equity, diversity, inclusion, and antiracism (EDIA) initiatives despite minimal funding resources and the limitations of the COVID-19 pandemic.

As new editors to *Collaborative Librarianship*, we (Chris Robinson-Nkongola and Carrie Forbes) are cognizant of how our own identities and experiences may shape the journal moving forward. As a co-editor who identifies as a Black female librarian, I (Chris) hope we can include more diverse voices on the editorial board and in the journal’s scholarship and professional practice discussions. As a white woman and library administrator, I (Carrie) am committed to doing the important critical reflective work necessary to mitigate injustices. We promise to continue to publish articles which highlight all forms of collaboration from a wide range of voices.

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<sup>1</sup> “WHO Director-General’s Statement on IHR Emergency Committee on Novel Coronavirus (2019-nCoV),” World Health Organization, last modified January 30, 2020, [https://www.who.int/director-general/speeches/detail/who-director-general-s-statement-on-ihf-emergency-committee-on-novel-coronavirus-\(2019-ncov\)](https://www.who.int/director-general/speeches/detail/who-director-general-s-statement-on-ihf-emergency-committee-on-novel-coronavirus-(2019-ncov)).

<sup>2</sup> American Library Association, *Diversity Counts 2012*, accessed March 3, 2022, <https://www.ala.org/aboutala/offices/diversity/diversitycounts/divcounts>; American Library Association, *Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion*, accessed March 3, 2022, <https://www.ala.org/advocacy/diversity>.