Qualitative and Quantitative Methods in Libraries Journal Special Issue: Social Justice, Social Inclusion

Bharat Mehra[1], Guest Editor's Introduction

[1]School of Information Sciences, University of Tennessee

The theme of this QQML Journal Special Issue "Social Justice, Social Inclusion" is in response to an urgent need to showcase social justice concerns in library and information science (LIS), a discipline that has long service-rooted traditions, yet, seldom are library services, user-centered practices, and information products articulated in terms of social justice constructs, vocabularies, and results (Mehra, Rioux, and Albright, 2010; Mehra, Albright, and Rioux, 2006). This Special Issue includes papers that describe and analyze LIS experiences in terms of action-oriented and socially relevant outcomes achieved via information-related work. Authors present their experiences in LIS work, practice, education, service design, and program implementation in ways that further community-wide progressive changes partnering with, and, on behalf of people on society's margins. They engaged in research and teaching while keeping their focus on social impact and community involvement.

The limited collection in this Special Issue includes some papers that were presented in a session entitled "Social Justice in Library and Information Science" that I organized during the 4th International Conference on Qualitative and Quantitative Methods in Libraries during May 22-25, 2012, in Limerick, Ireland. Additionally, some papers were selected from a follow-up session I organized during the 5th International Conference on Qualitative and Quantitative Methods in Libraries during June 4-7, 2013, in Rome, Italy. These seven papers in the first section (Section I: Social Justice Theory and Methods) focus on the theories, concepts, methods, approaches, and strategies that diverse LIS educators, practitioners, and service providers have adopted to integrate and actualize social justice principles in their information-related work and activities. Authors critique various quantitative, qualitative, action research, and/or mixed method approaches and question their significance and applicability to achieve action-oriented socially relevant outcomes in their LIS

work. The first paper entitled "The social justice framework in the Information Technology Rural Librarian Master's Scholarship Program: Bridging the rural digital divides" by Bharat Mehra, Kimberly Black, Vandana Singh, Jenna Nolt, Kaurri C. Williams-Cockfield, Susan Simmons, and Nancy Renfro introduces a conceptual framework of social justice in its application in an LIS educational program geared towards training rural librarians with information technology and management skills in a traditionally impoverished region in the United States. The second paper entitled "Recruitment methods in the Information Technology Rural Librarian Master's Scholarship Program (Part I and Part II): Implications of social justice in the Southern and Central Appalachian region" by Bharat Mehra and Vandana Singh focuses on one aspect of such programs to explore social justice efforts and activities more in detail in their operationalization and implementation. The third paper entitled "Teaching social justice in an information literacy course: An action research case study" by Kevin Rioux draws intersections between social justice, information literacy, and action research in the teaching context of a case study course environment. The fourth paper entitled "Building civic capacity using a holistic approach to public library service: A participant researcher's perspective on social justice in the Cayman Islands Public Library Service" by Kaurri C. Williams-Cockfield presents a practitioner's point of view of social justice in its application in an international context seldom discussed. The fifth paper entitled "Information technology services and school libraries: A continuum of social justice" by PT Dadlani and Ross Todd discusses the relevance of social justice in the school library environment. The sixth paper entitled "Open source software use in libraries: Implications for social justice?" by Vandana Singh highlights the underlying social justice values in open source software use in libraries. The author further discusses deeper issues of social justice implementation in a case study of open source software partnership experience in the last paper in this section entitled "A Case Study of Migration to an Open Source ILS: Partnership among State Libraries."

The second section (Section II: Social Inclusion) includes seven papers that were not presented during the two conference sessions on social justice (identified above) though they were part of the overall conference programs. Even though the papers in this section do not explicitly address the social justice angle, yet, the theme of social inclusion is very much part of their discussion of various library services and information resources. The first paper entitled "Disabled services in Turkish university libraries: Istanbul University Central Library: The project of "Information Center for (dis)abilities" by Umit Konya, Figen Cihan, and Özlem Bayrak explores the advances made for people with disabilities in an international academic library setting. The second paper entitled "Assistive technology and education laboratory for individuals with visual disabilities (GETEM)" by Leyla Kanik focuses on users with one form of disability and technologies available to assist them in their information tasks. The third paper entitled "An ethnographic study of male juvenile delinquents' information behavior in Malaysia: A work in progress" by Ezza Rafedziawati

Kamal Rafedzi, A.Abrizah, Halida Yu, and Norhayati Baba explores the information needs, information seeking processes, and information uses of another marginalized population often excluded from access to traditional information services. The fourth paper entitled "Bibliotherapy programmes in Dublin public libraries: A case-Study of Dublin City, Fingal and South Dublin Public Library services" by Emma Hutchinson investigates availability of bibliotherapy services for people suffering from mental health problems. The fifth paper entitled "Community users in academic libraries: Data-mining for fund-raising" by Wanda V. Dole and J. B. Hill examines the needs and services available for community users in a university setting. The sixth paper entitled "e-Inclusion and public libraries: A literature review" by Luis Mario Segura Hechavarria presents past research done in a newly emerging area of work in public library environments while the last paper in this section entitled "Survey of impact of gender on emotional intelligence of librarians" by Marzieh Siamak, Zolfa Haqguyan, and Hamid Alizadeh looks at the relationship between gender and emotional intelligence in the behavior and experiences of state university librarians.

The threads of social justice and social inclusion are deeply intertwined. The purpose of this Special Issue is to open the discourse in LIS surrounding these issues and concerns. The sooner we further such discussions of LIS work in terms of social justice, social inclusion, diversity, and the needs of disenfranchised users (Mehra, Olson, and Ahmad, 2011) the more effective we will be in extending our roles in society and embracing more progressive values and practices relevant in the 21st century.

References

Mehra, B., Albright, K. S., & Rioux, K. (2006). A Practical Framework for Social Justice Research in the Information Professions. *Proceedings of the 69th Annual Meeting of the American Society for Information Science & Technology 2006: Information Realities: Shaping the Digital Future For All*. Volume 43. [Short Paper], Austin, TX, November 3-8, 2006. [Available on CD-ROM].

Mehra, B., Olson, H. A., and Ahmad, S. (2011). Integrating Diversity across the LIS Curriculum: An Exploratory Study of Instructors' Perceptions and Practices Online. *International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA) Journal, 37*(1), 39-51. URL: http://www.ifla.org/files/hq/publications/ifla-journal/ifla-journal-37-1_2011.pdf

Mehra, B., Rioux, K., and Albright, K. S. (2010). Social Justice in Library and Information Science. In M. J. Bates and M. N. Maack (eds.), *Encyclopedia of Library and Information Sciences* (pp. 4820-4836). New York: Taylor & Francis Group..