

Underrepresented, Disadvantaged, and Underserved: Conceptualizations of Diversity in LIS Curriculum and Pedagogy

Roundtable Discussion Leaders:

Paul T. Jaeger, Assistant Professor, College of Information Studies, University of Maryland;
Mega M Subramaniam, Assistant Professor, College of Information Studies, University of Maryland;

Renee E. Hill (nee Franklin), Assistant Professor, School of Information Studies, Syracuse University; and

Lynn Westbrook, Associate Professor, School of Information, University of Texas

Information and information technology have become increasingly central to communication, interaction, education, employment, entertainment, government, and other vital means of social participation. To stay current with this ever changing landscape, LIS should reconsider approaches in curriculum and pedagogy to account for these social, technological, and political changes. Of particular concern are issues of diversity in LIS curriculum and pedagogy. The populations that have typically been the focus of diversity in the field (e.g., racial and ethnic minority groups, individuals with disabilities) do not encompass the range of populations that are underrepresented, disadvantaged, and underserved in terms of information.

For future information professionals to truly be ready to provide equal access to all populations, students will need to be prepared through coursework, internships, and other opportunities to work with populations that have traditionally been mistreated and marginalized in relation to information needs and information behavior, as well as populations that are traditionally underrepresented in the LIS professions. Such educational preparation would be broad enough to include legally protected populations based on race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, and disability, as well as populations with information access challenges related to education, poverty, literacy, language, and age, among others.

This roundtable discussion will consider the ways in which LIS programs and courses frame diversity and the populations that are considered “diverse” in curriculum and pedagogy. The discussion will identify the diversity themes and populations that are critical, but often excluded, as well as the accompanying blind spots in the field in relation to the information needs of diverse populations.