NOTES ON OPERATIONS

Anti-Racist Collections Workbook

A Tool for Building Inclusive Library Collections

Frederick C. Carey, Arthur Aguilera, Amanda Rybin Koob, Juleah Swanson, Natalia Tingle Dolan, and Alexander Watkins

The Anti-Racist Collections Workbook was developed by a team of librarians at the University of Colorado Boulder as an alternative to traditional diversity audits, which often fail to address systemic issues. Recognizing the deep-rooted ideologies of Whiteness in academic libraries, the workbook uses scholar Diane Gusa's White Institutional Presence framework to critically examine collection practices. It focuses on six areas: cataloging and classification, selecting materials, purchasing materials, approval profiles, weeding, and community engagement. Each section provides questions to challenge existing practices and promote anti-racist collection policies. By interrogating and adjusting traditional practices, the workbook aims to inspire library practitioners to create inclusive, representative collections that better serve all communities, moving beyond superficial representation to address structural inequities in library systems.

Introduction

Many libraries and their collections remain deeply ingrained in systems that perpetuate Whiteness.[1] To challenge this status quo, a team of librarians at The University of Colorado Boulder created the Anti-Racist Collections Workbook to help academic library employees at predominantly White institutions adopt more reflective approaches to current and future collection management efforts. One of the most common approaches to diversity assessment is to attempt to quantify diversity within collections through a diversity audit.[2] These investigations are often hindered by how difficult and problematic it can be to define what identity markers are being counted and how they are determined.[3] Often, these methodologies can end up more focused on numerical representation than on ingrained systems and dynamics of racial domination and power. For an in-depth exploration of our decision to bypass a diversity audit in order to focus on systemic issues, see our previously published book chapter: "Beyond the Diversity Audit: Uncovering Whiteness in Our Collections."[4]

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This article will focus on the development process and theoretical underpinnings of a reflective resource entitled the Anti-Racist Collections Workbook (see appendix).[5] The workbook was developed as a tool to shift focus from purely numerical representation to the critical examination of the decision-making processes that govern collections systemically. The workbook examines how Whiteness is embedded in key facets of collection development and management and offers a reflective framework for understanding how Whiteness has distorted and dominated collections practices. It is designed to walk readers through biases and unexamined norms that exist within library systems. The workbook does not have all the answers; instead, it is intended to raise questions about long-standing collections practices that have largely gone unnoticed, unexamined, and unchallenged. The workbook questions are meant as a first step to enacting systemic change in collection development by illuminating component parts of routine workflows. While we discuss the next steps we have identified for our institution, the necessary changes are going to be contextual for each institution.

This article outlines the use of Diane Gusa's White Institutional Presence (WIP) framework as the theoretical foundation of the workbook. WIP applies Whiteness theory to the realm of higher education and provides academic libraries with a strong contextual understanding of the manifestations of Whiteness in the academy. This article uses WIP to examine how WIP's key tenets of White ascendency, monoculturalism, White evasiveness, and White estrangement have influenced collections practices in libraries. This article examines more deeply how the workbook situates six key areas of collection management within the WIP framework, including: 1) cataloging and classifying materials, 2) selecting materials, 3) purchasing materials, 4) creating approval plans, 5) weeding collections, and 6) engaging with library communities. Our project's aim is to explicitly name the practices and systems we use across academic libraries in the United States to develop academic library collections, and to examine how they are created within and by Whiteness at predominantly White institutions. By problematizing Whiteness through the framework of White Institutional Presence, we propose that library workers can disrupt racism in collection-building habits and systems.

The authors would like to note that the workbook was developed between 2020 and 2023. The political and cultural environment at the time of expected publication is very different than when we began, and we recognize the work will necessarily be done in different ways in different contexts. We believe the workbook can be a powerful guide for personal action and reflection, and thus is still a valuable resource even when institutional support is limited or in flux.

Whiteness in Academic Libraries and Collections

Important work has been done to explore the complexities of critical race theory (CRT) and Whiteness in academic librarianship.[6] While an exhaustive review of the intersections of CRT, Whiteness, and librarianship is beyond the scope of this paper, it is instructive to understand how Whiteness has been variously understood in the field so that we can apply a critical frame to collections work in particular. As Gina Schlesselman-Tarango describes it, "Whiteness, in its ubiquity and with its claims to normalcy, resists definition"; among other definitions it can be "an identity or self-understanding, an ideology or set of group beliefs, a concept, a form of property, an experience, several social practices, a system

of power, that which terrorizes."[7] As Ian Beilin states, "Whiteness is a status that sets the standard for normality and reality itself (at least in much of North America and Europe) . . . often discursively hidden within concepts like neutrality or universality."[8] Examinations of Whiteness and librarianship should also be grounded explicitly in resistance to White supremacy, which is "a political, economic, and cultural system in which ideas of White superiority and entitlement are widespread, and relations of White dominance and non-White subordination are daily reenacted across a broad array of institutions and social settings."[9]

Some recent scholarship in library and information science connects concepts of Whiteness to library collections. In her 2019 blog post "Whiteness as Collections," Sofia Leung explores the impact that physical collections have on library spaces and, more specifically, scrutinizes how collection development practices continue to promote library spaces and materials as "sites of Whiteness."[10] Leung asserts, "Library collections continue to promote and proliferate Whiteness with their very existence and the fact that they are physically taking up space in our libraries."[11] Erica England examines the concept of " whiteness as property" and, in researching a sample of recently acquired print books, finds that of those books that are about nondominant narratives, 68 percent of authors are White. England concludes that White authors benefit monetarily and through tenure and promotion advantages in publishing the stories and voices of people of color.[12] Thus, "when the majority of academic collections are filled with White authoritative knowledge designed and created by the dominant Eurocentric culture and published in White-dominated publishing houses, a clear message is sent: there is little value in what people of color have to say."[13] In exploring a small, rural, children's collection, Wickham and Sweeney find that race-neutral selection, lack of weeding, and constraints on resources contribute to the perpetuation of Whiteness in collections.[14]

White Institutional Presence

Scholar Diane Gusa developed a framework for discussing the interrelated dimensions of Whiteness in higher education in 2010, calling it White Institutional Presence (WIP). This framework is grounded in higher education retention literature and the "marginalization and discrimination experiences of African American undergraduates."[15] We have found that this framework reflects how academic libraries contribute to a White institutional presence on campus. Indeed, WIP's four attributes—White ascendency, monoculturalism, White blindness (called here White evasiveness), and White estrangement—resonate with many of the concepts evident in literature examining Whiteness in academic libraries.[16]

To begin, WIP's attribute of White ascendency reflects the "thinking and behavior that arise from White mainstream authority and advantage, which in turn are generated from Whiteness's historical position of power and domination."[17] This leads to a sense of entitlement, the sense that it is right and natural for White people to maintain control over spaces, discourses, and outcomes. This idea is reflected in Beilin's question: "Is the library, by definition, a White place?"[18] Several writers have explored this idea of Whiteness as it manifests in library architecture and spaces.[19] This is also reflected in the continued

employment disparities for Black librarians and librarians of color, widely discussed over the past three decades but without significant improvement.[20]

Gusa's next attribute of WIP, monoculturalism, is "the expectation that all individuals conform to one 'scholarly' worldview, which stems from the aforementioned beliefs in the superiority and normalcy of White culture."[21] Monocultural values are so embedded in academic libraries in the United States that they may not be readily noticeable. For example, the practices of collection building are part of a scholarly life cycle that includes scholarly publishing, and these practices often disguise "the fact that BIPOC knowledge has never been considered valid knowledge."[22] Further, Chiu, Ettarh, and Ferretti note that collecting practices as codified in the Library Bill of Rights uphold a false neutrality ("Libraries should provide materials and information presenting all points of view . . ."),[23] operating on "an assumption that all points of view on all issues are equally fixed in formats that libraries collect and that publishers equally publish."[24] David James Hudson applies a related critique to the scholarly production of librarians themselves, unpacking the supposedly neutral, White values underpinning a widespread focus on practicality as a research priority in the LIS profession.[25]

Gusa further describes the next WIP attribute of White blindness or color blindness, or what we call White evasiveness or color evasiveness. This ideology "obscures and protects White identity and White privilege" while espousing the "neutral" concept that "everyone is the same," ignoring and undermining legacies of racism and White supremacy.[26] In this way, color evasiveness means that Whiteness is never the cause of racial inequality by negating discourse around racism. This concept likewise shows up in academic library literature as a "general consensus that Whiteness seeks invisibility"[27] and is related to the idea of "new racism" defined by Robin DiAngelo as "modern norms, policies, and practices [that] result in similar racial outcomes as in the past, while not appearing to be explicitly racist."[28]

Finally, the attribute of White estrangement sustains WIP by "distancing Whites physically and socially from people of color."[29] This relates to the significant racial employment disparities in libraries, mentioned above, as well as to the perpetuation of micro- or macroaggressions in the workplace against colleagues and students of color. White estrangement can also lead to problematic contributions to literature about racism in LIS, for example, by establishing "a line of inquiry that centers White scholarship."[30] This is an important limitation to the field of critical Whiteness studies and LIS. We are concerned with this eventuality in our work and strive for a research practice of self-reflexivity that positions our identities in relation to our thinking and lived experiences while citing the Black and people of color scholars who have written the foundational texts related to CRT and libraries. We also wish to avoid designating racial categories for those authors whose racial identities are not self-defined.

Gusa's attributes of White Institutional Presence resonate with much scholarship on Whiteness in LIS and with the critique of dominant ideologies evident in Critical Race Theory more broadly, such as "color blindness, objectivity, neutrality, and meritocracy."[31] Further, we see explicit connections between Gusa's framework and collections work in academic libraries. WIP clarifies how Whiteness manifests in academic environments and provides succinct language to apply directly to the structures underlying collection development work.

Development of the Workbook

Why a Workbook?

We considered conducting a large-scale diversity audit of our print circulating collections at the University of Colorado Boulder but quickly recognized the challenges of scaling existing practices for large academic collections and drawbacks of the approaches we considered (such as incorrectly identifying or assigning author identities or relying on problematic metadata).[32] The process of investigating diversity audits again prompted the question: diverse compared to what? This led us to examine the heterogeneous nature of predominantly White institutions and their academic library collections in the United States, and specifically the ideologies of Whiteness that have informed their creation over decades.[33] As Todd Honma notes in the forward of *Topographies of Whiteness: Mapping Whiteness in Library and Information Science*, it is important to "tackle both the structural and the representational aspects of Whiteness in LIS."[34] Diversity audits, in general, address representation without interrogating the structures and systems that we use to build collections. We suggest that in order to begin developing anti-racist collection practices, or to "dewhiten" our collections,[35] it is necessary to first comprehend the systems, informed by Whiteness, that have shaped our collecting practices as they exist today.

As an alternative to a diversity audit, we sought to develop a tool that could interrogate collection-building practices and establish strategies for anti-racist collections at predominantly White institutions through structured reflection. While the workbook focuses on separate functions and processes related to collection building, it also offers a holistic view, allowing practitioners to see the big picture while engaging in critical thinking about their individual work. This format also allows for group discussion and initiatives, and prompts can be customized for group engagement at a variety of institutions.

Workbook Structure: Sections and Questions

Whiteness is built into every aspect of collection-building systems, and these systems maintain existing knowledge production dominated by White voices and perspectives. In considering these systems, we identified six primary areas of focus: 1) cataloging and classifying, 2) selecting materials, 3) purchasing materials, 4) approval profiles, 5) weeding, and 6) community engagement. These six areas comprise the six sections of the workbook. Each section overtly articulates how current standards and practices in each area reflect WIP and continue to promote and maintain White ideologies. Each section includes a series of questions that library collection practitioners can leverage to challenge the current ecosystem at both individual and systemic levels. These questions are designed to challenge systemic barriers and spark new ideas for moving forward, and are not intended to shame any individuals or identities. They are also not exhaustive, and the workbook will be continually updated, expanded, and revised. The workbook underwent several reviews by colleagues at the University of Colorado Boulder during each stage of the design process before it was published and went live online. Reviewers were solicited from each area of focus of the workbook, and their feedback is represented in the published workbook.

Using the Workbook

We designed the workbook to inspire reflective practice. It is our hope that library workers will engage with the questions posed in the collection areas described in the workbook relevant to their work. Through this process of questioning and reflecting, we hope that librarians will consider their practices and design changes that best fit their institutions.

Libraries hold a myriad of formats within their collections that all possess a series of unique characteristics that differentiate them from each other and require specific considerations during evaluation. Leung's post "Whiteness as Collections" and the assertion that collections perpetuate Whiteness through the physical space they occupy inspired us to begin our process by focusing on print monographs in an attempt to begin dismantling our libraries' spaces as sites of Whiteness. Future plans include further developing the workbook to include a greater variety of material formats. We encourage adapting the workbook for your own context, formats, and use.

The Workbook is the starting point for libraries that want to make systematic changes and can complement other justice work, assessment, and inclusive practices. It is ideally undertaken by a library team that is dedicated to making proactive change, but also has relevance to individual practice and the impact that can be made by individual library workers, depending on their personal and professional context and assessment of risk. We understand that in the current political environment, this work may not be able to be undertaken institutionally; however, this work is still vitally important.

Anti-Racist Collections Workbook Summary

In this section, we will provide an overview of each core collection-building area found in the Workbook and examine how traditional practices may be reinforcing Whiteness, and pose questions from the Workbook to spark change. For a complete copy of the workbook, see appendix A. Following the overview of each Workbook section, we highlight ongoing projects where we have begun to enact changes to our practices and policies in the "Next Steps" section of this article.

Cataloging and Classifying

The use of controlled vocabularies in cataloging and classification practices reflects monoculturalism—that there is only one correct way to think. Jennifer Martin explains that controlled vocabularies "reflect and reinforce cultural norms which are harmful to nondominant peoples and cultures, with LGBTQ+ [Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer or Questioning, and the spectrum of sexual orientations, gender identities, and expressions beyond these categories, such as intersex, asexual, nonbinary, and more] people, racial and ethnic minorities, religious minorities, and non-Western countries most frequently discussed."[36] While controlled vocabularies do offer a standardized classification method, they are ingrained within White cultural biases and subject non-White cultures to inaccurate or

offensive descriptions and discoverability challenges. This standardization creates a cyclical process that maintains White dominance and the underrepresentation of diverse voices and topics.

White evasiveness manifests through attempts to be objective and/or neutral. Library catalogs do not present—nor have they ever—materials objectively or neutrally. Attempts at neutrality ignore or significantly understate the weightiness of race and ethnicity. This perpetuates the dominance of a White scholarly worldview[37] and directly contributes to the erasure of non-White experiences. We can also see White evasiveness in the way classification hides and ignores Whiteness, as it is always the unmentioned, invisible norm. Meanwhile, other ethnic groups are marked explicitly, the assumed exception to the White norm. For example, Library of Congress Subject Headings (LCSH) explicitly mark African American involvement in the Civil War with the heading United States—History—Civil War, 1861–1865—African Americans, while Whiteness has been normalized through the singular use of the heading United States—History—Civil War, 1861–1865.[38] White evasiveness is reflected in Whiteness' privilege to go unmarked as the default option in our cataloging systems.[39]

The Anti-Racist Collection Building Workbook prompts library employees who work on the cataloging and classification of materials to reflect on their own individual processes, as well as their institutional practices, to begin to dismantle White dominance in how materials are identified, recorded, and discovered. Questions such as "How are cataloging and classification systems distancing and segregating diverse knowledge?," "How will the cataloging and classification of BIPOC knowledge affect its placement in the library?," and "How are cataloging and classification systems using offensive and outdated terms?" encourage library workers to consider what it means for users to discover and engage with collections. Questions such as "How are cataloging and classification systems lumping diverse forms of knowledge together inappropriately?" and "How are cataloging and classification systems leaving White knowledge as unmarked and neutral but marking and othering BIPOC knowledge?" directly address the ways Whiteness acts as the system for determining where knowledge belongs and who knowledge is intended to serve within collections. While changes to controlled vocabularies like the LCSH can be lengthy and difficult processes, local changes, such as changing Indians of North America to the specific nations represented in materials, can be made to benefit local communities and library users.

Selecting Materials

The building of collections is an ongoing process shaped by choices made by library workers: "We buy one book to the exclusion of probably thousands of others. And in the process, we build our libraries as one kind of world, one that can never encompass all the possibilities of how we might organize ourselves in social, cultural, political, and, critically, material space."[40] This work is both historically and currently dominated by White perspectives, as the library profession in the United States is overwhelmingly White and many of our institutions' faculty and users are predominantly White. Gusa's concept of White ascendancy can be seen in library selection, as the ongoing choices made by library workers reflect White domination of academia and a concomitant monocultural conception

of knowledge production. WIP also explains the commonly held notion that this is both right and natural—that collections dominated by Whiteness are neutral, rather than the result of deliberate choices.

Library selectors choose materials suggested through ordering platforms, faculty, staff, and student requests, reviews published in professional journals, book awards, or vendor promotions. Some subjects have core collection lists that can be compared to our holdings to identify gaps in our coverage. In each of these cases, library workers use existing knowledge of the subject and of our users to determine whether each potential purchase is an appropriate acquisition. WIP can play a role in determining which publishers and titles are included in ordering systems, which titles gain exposure through reviews or awards, and which titles are accepted as making up the "core collection." As professionals typically educated within a monocultural system that demands adherence to a White scholarly worldview, many library selectors place a heavy emphasis and value on materials that reflect White, Western ways of knowing and knowledge production.[41] Due to this monoculturalism, many library selectors have gaps in awareness or even skepticism of materials from traditionally marginalized voices, which employ non-Western methodologies or which reflect diverse worldviews. In the workbook, we ask library professionals to consider how they can go beyond their typical sources for book discovery and purchasing to consider materials that reflect diverse ways of knowing and thinking. These knowledge practices have been cultivated, developed, and used by many cultures worldwide for generations, especially within BIPOC communities, but are frequently dismissed in a White scholarly framework.[42]

A White scholarly environment also determines what books are available to be purchased. For many subjects, library workers select items written by professional scholars, for an audience of upper undergraduate to graduate students and faculty. The ability to publish a scholarly monograph depends on the time, support, and resources afforded to privileged and majority White professions, such as tenure-track professors. Knowing that this is the environment that produces books we collect, the workbook poses the question: "How can we go beyond traditional scholarly publishing venues to include voices either overlooked or marginalized by White structures of knowledge production?"

White ascendency and entitlement are seen in collections that are overwhelmingly built to answer White questions and serve White needs. White users are the assumed and anticipated users of collections at predominantly White institutions. Library collections historically reflect an "imperialist desire to know and gather the cultural artifacts of marginalized cultures."[43] To this day, these library collections have been built to inform the assumed White users about the cultural "other." Thus, even materials on diverse topics are often not for diverse communities, but instead for White consumption. Indeed, such collections often tell people of color things they already know, as they are meant to inform White audiences about them.[44] To correct such a long-standing imbalance, it will take dedicated and consistent effort to change our practices and shift the makeup of our collections. Our workbook suggests that selectors consider the following questions when evaluating materials: "What does this material communicate about its intended audience?," "Who are the anticipated users of this material?," and "Is this material only about diverse communities, or is it truly for those communities?"

Due to White estrangement, White library workers may be less likely to know about the needs of their non-White users, less familiar with diverse publishers, and less likely to be approached for requests by non-White users. Overall, they are less likely to be connected to communities of color. The workbook asks library professionals to reflect on how current collection development practices distance libraries from diverse users. Then, to ask themselves: "How can we engage diverse users in the collection development process?" Similarly, disciplinary faculty may be unaware of alternatives to White-dominated course materials and textbooks, which often drive library selections. The workbook urges library workers to identify opportunities for partnering with disciplinary faculty to identify diverse materials to be included in course readings and syllabi.

Purchasing Materials

The practice of purchasing materials can be viewed through two lenses through which WIP may manifest: the policies and processes that guide acquiring materials and the vendors libraries engage with. White evasiveness is notable to unpack when considering procurement policies. Procurement offices are often required to consider the most efficient means of purchasing, which often emphasizes cost-effectiveness and lead-time as significant factors.[45] The standard processes of evaluation, such as competitive bids, may be viewed as neutral and applied equally, yet could obscure the advantage granted to Whiteness. For example, access to capital could impact the price or delivery time a vendor is able to offer. Yet, a Black-owned business may lack that same access to capital or loans through historic and systemic discrimination within the banking system.[46]

When purchasing materials, libraries are guided by a number of policies and processes, whether it is campus procurement policies, state laws, or internal processes and documentation on how to conduct acquisitions work. The American Library Association Cultural Proficiencies for Racial Equity specifically calls out that "many of the policies, procedures, and norms employed and enforced in libraries are rooted in White supremacy, and are often exclusionary to BIPOC individuals."[47] White evasiveness may be structurally embedded into processes and policies for acquiring materials, ensuring White economic power is upheld while disadvantaging communities of color.

When interrogating which vendors libraries engage with, White estrangement is present, especially when considering not only financial resources, but time and attention. "Who has a seat at the table?" is one of the questions posed in the workbook section on purchasing materials. This question is meant to interrogate which vendors libraries engage with through not only financial resources, but also time and attention. Both a library's long-standing relationships with specific vendors and the predominantly White demographics of the publishing profession result in White estrangement and the physical distancing of libraries from businesses owned and managed by people of color. Through these economic relationships, libraries have an opportunity to dismantle an environment of White estrangement that primarily serves large, White-owned and managed businesses and cultivate new, enriching relationships with businesses that support and grow communities of color and are owned and managed by people of color.

While history may favor White economic power, there can be mechanisms and the development of policies to dismantle WIP, even for those operating within a public procurement system.[48] For example, the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) created a pilot program to partner and mentor large and small contractors with members of underserved communities, and increase outreach to small businesses representing LGBTQ+, disabled, and veteran communities about navigating NASA's procurement process.[49] Libraries can engage in similar exercises to examine barriers to purchasing materials and engaging with a diverse vendor base. Questions found in the workbook on purchasing materials can guide library workers to examine the ways procurement policies, procedures, and engaging with vendors currently uphold WIP, while considering alternate avenues.

Approval Profiles

Approval plans are widely adopted collection-building tools designed to identify and streamline the acquisition of newly published works that fall within the scope of a library's collection. This acquisition method reflects the current landscape of knowledge production and dissemination and plays a key role in perpetuating Whiteness in academic collections. Varying by vendor, approval plans identify materials using a set of subject and nonsubject parameters that are set by the library. These criteria may be reliant on subject classification, language, publisher, award lists, geographic origin, format, readership level, price, and more. Depending on the goal of the library, vendors will notify librarians if a title is in scope or will immediately purchase and deliver the title as part of an automated service.

The main value of the approval plan is derived from a vendor's ability to identify relevant materials from thousands of new publications each year. In recent years, approval plans have been found to prioritize the auto-shipment of material from large academic publishers as compared to individual titles selected by librarians or requested by users.[50] Do approval profiles and other methods of acquisition proactively include historically under-collected publishers or voices? We pose this question in the workbook to encourage library workers to critically evaluate the profiling and book matching processes of any vendor, including how the vendor applies subject thesauri and nonsubject parameters to materials and how those practices vary across publishers. Given that approval vendors are situated within a dominantly White publishing industry, the issues discussed in the Selecting Materials and Cataloging & Classification sections of this article materialize in practice through approval profiles. Vendors have taken note of the pitfalls behind mainstream classification systems like the Library of Congress Classification (LCC) and Dewey Decimal System and have developed interdisciplinary tags in an attempt to identify non-White materials.[51] However, these interdisciplinary categories are subjective and manually applied based on data received from the publisher and are designed to assist with numerical representation, rather than a critical redesign of the service. As noted in a recent study, tags may not be as effective identifying diverse authors, nor are they systematically applied to many small and independent publishers.[52]

Much of the literature around the evaluation of approval plans is primarily economic in nature. Most libraries evaluate their profiles based on the speed of fulfillment or cost efficiencies. Workbook

questions such as “Are selection filters potentially eliminating materials that do not conform to a White scholarly worldview?” and “Are we resistant to try alternative modes of collection building?” encourage library workers to expand how approval plans are evaluated and if adopting these tools will advance or hinder the goal of creating anti-racist collections. Predominantly White institutions should consider whether we are overly reliant on tools that are designed to acquire mainstream materials, and whether librarians are demonstrating White evasiveness by passing the work of identifying diverse materials to vendors that are less effective at that goal than a selector making title-by-title selections.[53] The workbook prompts library professionals to critically consider the filters and algorithms used, advocate for needed changes, and if necessary deemphasize approval services that reinforce knowledge structures informed by White voices and perspectives.

Weeding

Weeding is crucial to keeping collections healthy and relevant, but weeding processes and decisions can perpetuate White knowledge’s domination of collections. Oftentimes, weeding decisions are made primarily by sets of criteria that include age and circulation or usage statistics. These are factors that are impacted by White supremacy, for example, because exclusion of materials by BIPOC authors from curricula can lead to lower usage, or BIPOC issues may be less popular areas of study for a predominantly White student body. White evasiveness and the desire to ignore race as a factor presents through the reliance on such superficially “objective” criteria. However, even these factors are impacted by White ascendancy in the academy. We recommend library workers who are planning a weeding project start reconsidering traditional methods used in the weeding process and ask themselves: Are we relying on usage data too extensively when making weeding decisions, and how might we enhance criteria that rely solely on circulation? Additionally, library professionals should consider if they are taking race and Whiteness into account explicitly in their weeding criteria.

Overall, data-driven weeding practices can result in diverse but less popular materials being removed. Materials that would be relevant to BIPOC students or that could represent BIPOC points of view in our physical spaces may be weeded uncritically. The result is monocultural library spaces that estrange our users from diverse voices. This is one way the library perpetuates White estrangement: White users of the library are unlikely to be confronted by alternate points of view or non-White knowledge. Weeding does not have to decrease the diversity of a collection; indeed, it has the potential to increase representation of diverse voices. We should ask ourselves: how can we use weeding as a tool to increase the diversity of the collection and correct historical imbalances?

When we work to change the White domination of our collections, we frequently see White entitlement in the pushback to the diversification and weeding of collections. See for example the vitriolic backlash against librarians who have called for weeding that increases diversity and inclusion.[54] This backlash reflects the entitled belief that White domination of collections is both right and natural due to the “objective” superiority of White knowledge, rather than being a result of ingrained and systematic White supremacy. It extends false ideas that White domination of collections is earned as the result of

meritocracy, rather than the extension of unearned White privilege. The workbook asks library workers to be prepared to defend weeding decisions that increase the diversity of the collection.

Engaging with Community

The Anti-Racist Collection Building workbook underscores the critical need for library collections to be more representative of the communities they serve. For all the reasons discussed thus far, White estrangement embodies library culture. The lack of BIPOC representation in collections, spaces, and library employees continues to marginalize and exclude community members. It is understandable, then, that BIPOC communities may maintain skepticism toward library spaces and collections at predominantly White institutions. While White estrangement creates separation between libraries and BIPOC communities, it is White evasiveness that perpetuates the divide. Therefore, it is crucial that libraries increase reciprocal engagement with marginalized communities.

Questions such as "How are we inviting and gathering our institution's BIPOC perspectives on the state of our collections?" guide libraries to consider methods of engagement specific to their individual institutions and their communities. Furthermore, questions such as "Are we committed to engaging with anti-racist work in other areas of the academy that impact our collections, such as hiring, promotion, and culture?" guide librarians to approach systemic issues within libraries, higher education, and the knowledge ecosystem more broadly. This workbook encourages libraries to not only acknowledge their problematic systems and structures but also emphasizes that it is only through collaborating with the larger academic context and communities marginalized by those very systems and structures that change can happen.

Next Steps

At the University of Colorado Boulder, we are using the workbook to revise our collection development policies and approval plans as a way to decenter Whiteness. It is our aim to change traditional collection-building practices by evaluating our policies and establishing practices for including smaller presses and publishers from the Global South to our approval plans and critically examining how selection filters remove materials from non-White voices and perspectives.

One conclusion is that libraries may need to rethink the overreliance on automated purchasing, along the lines of Meredith Farkas's humanistic and thoughtful process of slow librarianship.[55] Our work reveals that in the move to streamline collection development, libraries have increasingly relied on large vendors and algorithms to make selection choices, but these systems not only embed bias, but they also tend to make such bias invisible. Countering these systems will take an "antiracist, responsive, and values-driven practice,"[56] which takes time and care that is not always allowed for in the neoliberal university. Next steps at our institution include undertaking further case studies and projects to ensure that we're on the right track and to help us ask new questions.

We are also committed to sharing this work and incorporating feedback from librarians working in institutions that vary in size and community demographics. While the workbook questions arose within the context of a large research-intensive, predominately White institution strongly influenced by White Institutional Presence, we are also interested in how libraries within more diverse communities and institutions such as Historically Black College and University libraries develop their collections systematically with their user audiences in mind.

In response to these considerations, we have begun to implement projects guided by our workbook. Colleagues at our institution are creating an Indigenous Knowledge collection development policy that focuses on items from Indigenous perspectives or under Indigenous creative control. We are also partnering with local, BIPOC-owned bookstores to acquire diverse ranges of experiences and stories while financially supporting community institutions. We have begun evaluating and adjusting profiles to ensure inclusion of materials from BIPOC-owned publishers as well as resisting fully automating the weeding process to ensure weeding initiatives contribute to a more diverse collection instead of perpetuating a monocultural collection. We have also hosted discussions of the workbook, including varied possible implementation ideas, with colleagues at our campus libraries and across our state university library system. As these initiatives are ongoing, we have yet to reflect on our methodologies, experiences, and potential success. We plan to share more about these projects in future publications.

Limitations

The workbook was initially conceived by a group of tenure-track librarians at a well-resourced, Carnegie R1 university library. We have the time and motivation to conduct research that impacts changes in our practice of librarianship, and this work is currently protected by institutional support of academic freedom. We also rely on the expertise and experiences of colleagues in various roles at our institution, including teaching track librarians, library staff, and student employees, and we have made an effort to include their expertise by soliciting their feedback. We also know that power differentials in library contexts impact collections decision-making at all institutions and we aim to acknowledge the work done by all library workers and encourage discussion and initiatives among library workers in every role. We encourage readers to consider what is within their spheres of influence and to continue this work with colleagues who share a commitment to inclusive, anti-racist collections.

We also recognize that this kind of reflective, systems-focused work is time-intensive and difficult. This is even more true for library professionals working in politically hostile and oppressive states and regions throughout the United States and worldwide, or at institutions that may be at risk for funding cuts and targeted harassment. While at the anticipated date of publication, attacks on all types of libraries and educators are prolific in the United States, we hope for a future where more library professionals and vendor partners engage these questions so that the work of dismantling Whiteness in our collections will become a truly collective effort.

Conclusion

Current collection management practices remain firmly grounded in the White structures that govern higher education and library systems. The Anti-Racist Collections Workbook leverages Diane Gusa's White Institutional Presence framework and applies her attributes of White ascendency, monoculturalism, White evasiveness, and White estrangement to prominent collection development processes. Each section of the workbook provides librarians with opportunities to disrupt practices that perpetuate White dominance in collections by encouraging reflection on current policies at both the individual and institutional levels. Systemic changes are needed to fix systemic problems, and impactful change should begin with a critical examination of the methods, policies, and practices of collection building outlined in the workbook.

Appendix A

Anti-racist Collection Building Workbook

White Institutional Knowledge

The library literature documents a long history of marginalizing non-White voices and institutionalizing White knowledge as the norm. To identify ways in which Whiteness manifests in our collections, we position collection building within the White Institutional Presence (WIP) conceptual framework developed by Diane Gusa. This framework identifies four ways that Whiteness functions in academic institutions. We find that academic libraries and our systems are necessarily shaped by WIP as well as contribute to it. For each component of the WIP framework, Monoculturalism, White Ascendancy & Entitlement, White Evasiveness, and White Estrangement, we discuss how academic libraries are enmeshed in that aspect of WIP and provide reflection questions to spark ideas about how collections work is part of WIP as well as how it might resist WIP.

Monoculturalism

Monoculturalism in academic spaces is "the expectation that all individuals conform to one 'scholarly' worldview, which stems from the belief in the superiority and normalcy of White culture" (Gusa pp. 474–475). This concept is reflected in library collections that center on materials that conform to a White scholarly worldview and exclude materials that do not conform.

Monoculturalism manifests itself in all aspects of culture. It "creates a strong belief in the superiority of one group's cultural heritage, history, values, language, beliefs, religion, traditions, and arts and crafts" (Sue, 2004, p. 764). This concept is reflected in library collections that center materials that conform to a White scholarly worldview, and exclude materials that do not conform, whether consciously or unconsciously.

Monocultural values are also embedded in the environment and setting, including through the natural environment, architecture (including honorific building names), art and decoration (including statues),

as well as the racial and ethnic makeup of the student, faculty, and staff population. Overwhelmingly White library collections help create such a monocultural environment.

White Ascendancy and Entitlement

White ascendency is the system of "thinking and behavior that arise from White mainstream authority and advantage, which in turn are generated from Whiteness's historical position of power and domination" (Gusa pp. 472). This leads to a sense of White entitlement, the notion that it is right and natural for Whites to maintain control over spaces, discourses, and outcomes.

White ascendancy can be seen in the domination of White voices in our collections, as well as the sense that this is both right and natural. This reflects a history of White domination in the academy, including White privilege in hiring and promotion of faculty and librarians, privilege in the selection of books published by academic presses, and privilege in which voices are included in syllabi, curricula, and assigned as textbooks.

White ascendency and entitlement are also reflected in the anticipated users of our collections. Library collections historically reflect an "imperialist desire to know and gather the cultural artifacts of marginalized cultures" (Brook, Ellenwood, & Lazzaro, 2015). Thus, even our materials on diverse topics are often not for diverse communities, but instead for White consumption.

When we work to change the White domination of our collections, we frequently see White entitlement in the pushback to the diversification and weeding of collections.

White Evasiveness

Diane Gusa uses the term "White blindness" to describe an ideology that "obscures and protects White identity and White privilege" while simultaneously espousing the "neutral" concept of color blindness (p. 477). Here, we will use the terms "White evasiveness" and "color evasiveness," which we think more accurately capture the impact while also avoiding ableist language (Annamma, Jackson, & Morrison, 2015).

Color evasiveness "contends that everyone is the same," ignoring and undermining legacies of racism and White supremacy (477). By negating discourse around racism, color evasiveness effectively renders Whiteness the hidden, invisible norm, and never the cause of racial inequality.

White evasiveness means librarians might think of their collections as "neutral" rather than as expressions of White privilege, and therefore not in need of diversification. It can lead to ignoring the overwhelming White domination in our collections, and instead simply adding a few token diverse titles to a collection. White evasiveness can also be seen in cataloging systems that set Whiteness as the default (such as creating subheadings for non-White racial or ethnic groups, classifying books from diverse authors in separate areas of the library).

A critical view of individual texts as well as institutional decisions and policies can help mitigate the effects of White evasiveness, as can the acknowledgment and naming of Whiteness as a condition in which collections were and are built, cataloged, and maintained. Working against White evasiveness also requires commitment to "White responsibilities on a multicultural campus," discussed further in the section on White Estrangement below (478).

White Estrangement

White Estrangement sustains White Institutional Presence (WIP) by "distancing Whites physically and socially from people of color" (Gusa, p. 478). White people spend much of their lives segregated from people of color, and when they arrive in the potentially more diverse spaces of higher education, they are unable to conceive of how to create a truly multicultural environment or even to initiate genuine contact and dialogue with their peers of color.

Overwhelmingly White collections contribute to White estrangement from people of color by prioritizing White structures of knowledge production, communication, and format that perpetuate monoculturalism and White ascendancy and entitlement. White-dominated collections contribute to White estrangement by both alienating people of color from library resources and failing to connect users to the scholarship and ideas of people of color.

White estrangement also stymies efforts to establish multicultural library communities, events, and spaces. The task of creating a truly diverse collection is made more difficult by the overwhelming Whiteness of the library profession, as White librarians' estrangement from communities of color will mean they have a harder time creating a multicultural environment and a collection that reflects the needs and interests of a diverse community.

Getting Started

"We demand that LIS directly acknowledge and address the root of the issue: White Supremacy was built into our structures and systems from the very beginning and continues to be an active, destructive force" (Leung & Lopez McKnight, 2021).

We know that institutional racism is built into every aspect of our collection-building systems, and that these systems work in concert to uphold White supremacy in knowledge production. In this section, we have reorganized and edited our reflection questions into sections that focus on different processes in library collection building and maintenance. In each section, we invite you to reflect on how Whiteness and institutional racism is built into your collection-building practices: how our collection practices favor White knowledge at the expense BIPOC knowledge, how our collections serve as a physical manifestation of White supremacy in knowledge production, how our categorization processes normalize Whiteness, and how our weeding process can decrease diversity.

These questions are not meant to shame individuals or any identity. This is an exercise for identifying systemic barriers and challenging norms. The questions are also designed to spark new ideas for moving forward, creating alternative systems, and dismantling harmful processes.

Questions to Consider When Cataloging and Classifying

- Cataloging and classifying materials are exercises of power: power over naming and organizing knowledge; making knowledge accessible and discoverable; and appropriating authority. Standardized systems and vocabularies act as catalysts that normalize White supremist ideologies. Jennifer Martin explains that controlled vocabularies "reflect and reinforce cultural norms which are harmful to nondominant peoples and cultures, with LGBTQ + people, racial and ethnic minorities, religious minorities, and non-Western countries most frequently discussed" (Martin, 2020). What actions can we take to dismantle these harmful practices that actively hide and ostracize BIPOC authors and points of view? How will historically under-collected material be cataloged and classified in the collection? How might this affect discoverability?
- How will the cataloging and classification of BIPOC knowledge affect its placement in the library?
- How are cataloging and classification systems distancing and segregating diverse knowledge?
- How are cataloging and classification systems lumping diverse forms of knowledge together inappropriately?
- How are cataloging and classification systems leaving White knowledge as unmarked and neutral but marking and othering BIPOC knowledge?
- How are cataloging and classification systems using offensive and outdated terms? How do these terms reflect a White point of view?

Questions to Consider When Selecting Materials

Librarians make decisions on individual titles to select based on their knowledge of their users' needs. This work is both historically and currently dominated by White perspectives: the library profession is overwhelmingly White, and many of our institutions' users are predominantly White (PWI), while our users of color may not feel comfortable approaching a White librarian to express their collection needs. This work has influenced decades of collection-building decisions that have resulted in our current collections that are overwhelmingly built to answer White questions and serve White needs. To correct such a long-standing imbalance, it will take dedicated and consistent effort to change our practices and change the makeup of our collections.

- Ask ourselves the following questions about materials we select for purchase:
  - What does this material communicate about its intended audience?
  - Who are the anticipated users of this material?
  - Is this material only about diverse communities, or is it truly for those communities?
- How can we go beyond traditional scholarly publishing venues to consider materials that reflect diverse ways of knowing and thinking?

- How can we avoid imposing a single White scholarly worldview on materials from different traditions with different ways of knowing? (heavy reliance on peer review as a measure of validity, focus on empiricism vs. alternative ways of knowing, alternative methodologies)
- How can we avoid emphasizing materials in English over other languages?
- How can we include materials either overlooked or marginalized by White structures of knowledge production, communication, and/or format?
- How do current collection development practices distance librarians from diverse users and collections? How can we engage diverse users in the collection development process?
- Are our selectors mostly White? How can we empower BIPOC librarians to make selection decisions while making sure to compensate them for this expertise?

Questions to Consider When Purchasing Materials

The process and policies of acquiring materials are often overlooked when considering developing an inclusive and anti-racist collection. These policies are often derived from institutional, campus, state, and federal procurement policies and laws. From Gusa's WIP framework, the authority and advantage generated from Whiteness's historical position of power and dominance are embedded into the structures and economics of purchasing materials.

- Where do elements of Gusa's framework of White Institutional Presence appear in purchasing materials?
- What processes and policies are within our power to change?
- Have we examined the existing procurement rules, policies, and practices with an anti-racist lens to decentralize Whiteness and colonialism?
- Who is getting "a seat at the table"?
- Which vendors do we visit at conferences?
  - What vendors do we engage with in meetings?
- What does an anti-racist sourcing strategy look like for our library?

Questions to Consider When Creating Approval Profiles

Approval plans are one of the key ways that White supremacy becomes embedded in the process of collection building. These plans often identify subjects, publishers, and formats to automatically purchase or reject. The criteria of our approval plans typically reflect White ways of knowing and privilege White methods of knowledge production, such as the scholarly monograph, peer review, university presses, academic affiliations, etc. How can we disrupt, expand, reduce our reliance on, or change our approval plans so that we automatically collect diverse forms of knowledge?

- How can we avoid imposing a single White scholarly worldview on materials from different traditions with different ways of knowing? (heavy reliance on peer review as a measure of validity, focus on empiricism vs. alternative ways of knowing, alternative methodologies)

- How can we include materials either overlooked or marginalized by White structures of knowledge production, communication, and/or format?
- Are selection filters potentially eliminating materials that do not conform to a White scholarly worldview?
- How can we add publishers from the Global South or smaller presses to our selection profiles?
- How do collections policies evade the issue of Whiteness in the collection?
- Do approval profiles and other methods of acquisition proactively include historically under-collected publishers or voices? If so, how, and if not, how can we do this individually and collectively?
- In what ways do our collection-building systems reproduce and reinforce White domination in the academy? Are we resistant to trying alternative modes of collection building, which may indicate White entitlement?

Questions to Consider When Weeding

Weeding is a key way that librarians keep collections healthy and relevant, but weeding processes and decisions can perpetuate White knowledge's domination of collections. Oftentimes, weeding decisions are made primarily by sets of criteria that often include age and popularity of material. These are factors that are impacted by White supremacy, for example exclusion of materials by BIPOC authors from curricula leads to lower usage, or BIPOC issues are less popular areas of study for a predominantly White student body. This results in materials that would be relevant to BIPOC students or that could represent BIPOC points of view in our physical spaces being weeded.

- How can we use weeding as a tool to increase the diversity of the collection and correct historical imbalances?
- Are we prepared to defend the weeding decisions that increase the diversity of the collection?
- Since low usage of diverse materials can reflect White ascendancy in the curriculum, how might we go beyond weeding criteria that rely on circulation?
- How are we taking race and Whiteness into account explicitly in weeding or acquisition criteria?
- Does a book by an underrepresented individual or on a marginalized topic have low usage data because of difficulty in discoverability? Are we relying on usage data too extensively when making weeding decisions?
- How can we ensure BIPOC users and librarians are involved in weeding processes, and how can we compensate them for this expertise?

Questions to Consider When Using Collections to Engage with Our Community

Empowering BIPOC communities to play a role in collection building is essential to building a more just collection, and this requires building reciprocal relationships with these communities, communities

that may rightly be suspicious of the library. Creating fewer White collections will require creating a less White profession, and thus the work also includes doing the work to make librarianship a more diverse profession. Collections and displays must be less White if the library is to be relevant to BIPOC communities, if our collections are to communicate that BIPOC belong in the library's spaces and that the library's resources were built with BIPOC in mind.

- How are we inviting and gathering our institution's BIPOC perspectives on the state of our collections?
- How can we better engage with the BIPOC community to create a truly diverse collection that reflects their needs and interests?
- How can we better engage with BIPOC communities to include materials either overlooked or marginalized by White structures of knowledge production, communication, and/or format?
- How are we ensuring the BIPOC communities are compensated for their knowledge and expertise?
- How can we work together with faculty to diversify curricula?
- Are we committed to engaging with anti-racist work in other areas of the academy that impact our collections, such as hiring, promotion, and culture?
- Are there ways that we can feature this material in displays, exhibitions, etc., while avoiding tokenism?
- How can the items in our collections be used to promote cross-racial dialogue?

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Notes

1. In this article we have chosen to capitalize White and Whiteness because "to not name 'White' as a race is, in fact, an anti-Black act which frames Whiteness as both neutral and the standard," Nguyễn, Ann Thúy,

and Maya Pendleton. "Recognizing Race in Language: Why We Capitalize 'Black' and 'White.'" *Center for the Study of Social Policy: Ideas into Action* (blog), n.d., https://cssp.org/2020/03/recognizing-race-in-language-why-we-capitalize-black-and-white/. Additionally, we affirm that "Whiteness is not only an absence. It's not a hole in the map of America's racial landscape. Rather, it is a specific social category that confers identifiable and measurable social benefits," Eve L. Ewing, "I'm a Black Scholar Who Studies Race. Here's Why I Capitalize 'White,'" *ZORA* (blog), July 1, 2020, https://zora.medium.com/im-a-black-scholar-who-studies-race-here-s-why-i-capitalize-white-f94883aa2dd3.

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16. We chose to use the terms "White evasiveness" and "color evasiveness" in the workbook as they accurately capture the impact while also avoiding ableist language. See Amanda Rybin Koob et al.
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30. Schlesselman-Tarango, "Introduction": 10.
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37. By *White Scholarly Worldview*, we refer to the epistemological framework that determines what information is valid and who possesses authoritative knowledge. This worldview prizes objectivity, quantitative data, rationality, and linear thinking. It is an exclusive epistemology that generally rejects knowledge from other traditions. Gusa, "White Institutional Presence," 475.

38. This phenomenon extends beyond race and ethnicity to other identifiable characteristics that deviate from the invisible norm, such as gender and sexuality. For more information, see Hope Olson's *The Power to Name,* 1–15.

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