RACISM IN ACADEMIC LIBRARIES: PRELIMINARY FINDINGS FROM THE 2021 VIMLOC REDUX SURVEY

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Diversity has received increased attention in academic libraries. Many studies have discussed various diversifying efforts in hiring and retaining librarians from ethnic minority groups, such as MLIS enrollment diversification, equity-related workshops, mentorship programs, and leadership training, whereas racism has been understudied within the profession (Alabi, 2018; Hudson, 2017). Although anecdotal accounts of racism experiences have been recounted in the literature, there are relatively few studies that explore how pervasive these experiences are among visible minority librarians (VMLs). Our session will contribute preliminary findings to the topic of racism in academic libraries, based on aggregated and cross-tabulated data from the Visible Minority Librarians of Canada Network (ViMLoC) 2021 survey.

ViMLoC conducted its first comprehensive survey on VMLs in 2013 to understand and provide support to VMLs based on their feedback. The Network delivered a revised redux of this survey during February and March in 2021 to examine the changes with regards to VMLs in Canadian librarianship. For this second iteration, an online survey questionnaire was created using Qualtrics through Wilfrid Laurier University. The survey invitation was distributed to VMLs across Canada through relevant library association electronic mailing lists and ViMLoC's electronic mailing list, website, and social media platforms. English and French versions were made available separately. The survey consisted of multiple-choice and open-ended questions to capture demographic, education, and employment information. Questions about the respondents' employment situation included job satisfaction and management position. Furthermore, the survey allowed respondents to report their experiences in the workplace, including how much they were treated with respect and accepted as an equal member by colleagues, how much their knowledge and work contributions were valued by colleagues, and how much they felt free to speak their mind and express their views openly among colleagues. The respondents also rated how frequently they had experienced ten forms of racial microaggressions throughout their career.

This proposed session will present some preliminary findings from this survey, which will be useful to library administrators, librarians, and researchers working on multicultural issues, leadership, and other areas related to equity, diversity, and inclusion. The results will help academic libraries identify the needs of visible minority librarians and propose projects to support them in their current positions or for advancement.

References:

Alabi, J. (2018). From hostile to inclusive: Strategies for improving the racial climate of academic libraries. Library Trends, 67(1), 131-146.

Hudson, D.J. (2017). On "diversity" as anti-racism in library and information studies: A critique. Journal of Critical Library and Information Studies, 1(1), 1-36. DOI: https://doi.org/10.24242/jclis.v1i1.6