Dear LES Members,

These notes come to you during very turbulent times. Since the Spring 2020 issue of *Biblio-Notes*, the COVID-19 pandemic has taken the lives of over 200,000 Americans and nearly 1 million people globally. The economic impact of the pandemic has directly affected higher education, leading to botched in-person class rollouts at many colleges and universities as well as austerity measures in all areas of education (mass layoffs, slashed budgets for collection development and professional development for librarians, the abrupt transition to online teaching for many, and the list goes on). The recent death of Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg hangs over a Presidential election that could fundamentally alter the nation in profoundly unsettling ways.

Over the Summer, acknowledgement of the murders of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Ahmaud Arbery, and countless other Black Americans at the hands of the police led to massive protests. One result of these protests is that many college and university libraries, recognizing the overwhelming whiteness of the (cont. on page 3)
Dear LES Members,

Many of us started this Fall semester engaging in our work remotely, while others were tasked with taking a hybrid approach, and still others forging ahead in person. It’s been a time of uncertainty. The one constant has been the commitment of LES members to providing excellent instruction, reference, and collection development service at our libraries. This newsletter showcases that commitment.

Fresh from our ACRL summer meetings, the notes from incoming chair Brian Flota, the LES planning committee report, and the formation of the Anti-Racist Action Plan Ad Hoc Committee all highlight LES’s ongoing plans to shape a responsive organization. In her article, “Developing a Diversity Audit for an Academic Library Collection,” Aimee Gee discusses one approach to assess library collections for diversity. In “Librarian to the Rescue,” April K. Miller shares an experience in which an unanticipated faculty request leads to deeper liaison connections.

Want to share your experiences as a librarian? We welcome articles, reports, and reflections from all of our members. We hope to see you featured in the Spring!

All the best,
Stacy Reardon
Matt Roberts
profession and the collections we steward, have released statements in support of the Black Lives Matter movement, vowed to take steps to change hiring practices that have excluded librarians of color, change workplace culture that has led to many librarians of color leaving the profession, and sought to decolonize the stacks to make collections more reflective of the world of knowledge. While many of these statements might end up being, disappointingly, performative in nature, it is my hope that an inward look at our profession, especially within the Ivory Tower, will generate long-lasting, systemic change.

With this in mind, seven members of LES have formed the LES Anti-Racist Action Plan Committee. The committee was the brainchild of Past-Chair Nancy Foasberg. Ginny Moran is serving as co-chair. Other members on the committee include Kristin Nielsen, Natalie Ornat, Amanda Rybin Koob, Cathy Troupos, and myself. This issue of Biblio-Notes will have more information about the group’s charge and its objectives to ensure LES remains committed to anti-racist action now and in the future.

While LES members were unable to meet in person this Summer at the 2020 ALA Conference, many of us met virtually from mid-June to early July 2020. Jessie Ransom from ExLibris and Elena Sanchez from Biblioteca Nacional de España spoke about Open Educational Resources (OER) from European and North American perspectives in a joint meeting between LES and ESS (European Studies Section). Much thanks to Ava Brillat and the Conference Program Planning Committee for putting together an excellent discussion. The Collections Discussion Group led a conversation about collection development during the first days of the pandemic as well as ways to diversify existing library collections. There was also discussion about OER. The Reference Discussion Group focused on the challenges of doing reference during the early days of the pandemic, especially through chat and virtual meetings. There was also a fairly prophetic discussion about preparing for the Fall semester. One of the things discussed, a potential decline in the number of one-shot instruction sessions (given the strains of prepping for both virtual and in-person class for most faculty), has proven to be true, at least for this librarian.

To conclude, I would like to thank the previous two Chairs of LES--Chris Ruotolo and Nancy Foasberg--for their mentorship, supreme helpfulness, and for modeling stellar examples of leadership as I fumble my way through this new role! Congratulations to all who have accepted new roles in all of the various LES committees. In the months ahead I look forward to continuing the collaboration with Vice-Chair Glenda Insua. Hopefully I can be as effective a mentor to her as Nancy and Chris are to me.

I hope you all are able to stay healthy, maintain some level of sanity, and avoid burnout during this tumultuous time.

Take the LES Social Media Survey!

The publications committee of LES would like to know how our social media accounts can help you in your role as an academic and research librarian who supports literatures in English programs. We’d also like to connect with more LES members and other helpful accounts on social media. We’ve created a short survey to collect information towards these goals: http://tiny.cc/ncwzsz
Planning for the Future: The LES Planning Committee in 2019-20

Mark Dahlquist

The Literatures in English Planning Committee was busy over the past academic year, working to revise a strategic plan for LES that reflects the changing landscape of librarianship while also moving the section forward. This year, in addition to completing the LES Strategic Plan 2020, the Planning Committee also developed an LES Community Agreement, which clarifies expectations for inclusive communications at LES events, and establishes procedures for cases where these expectations are not met. The Planning Committee for 2019-2020 included Sherri Brown, Camille Cooper, Mark Dahlquist (Chair), Brian Flota, Nancy Foasberg (ex-officio), Ginny Moran, and Chris Ruotulo (ex-officio).

LES Strategic Plan 2020

The LES Strategic Plan 2020 (http://www.ala.org/acrl/aboutacrl/directoryofleadership/sections/les/about/lesstrategic) provides an adaptable framework for guiding LES activities, at a time when the ALA and ACRL are rethinking basic organizational structures in

A key update to the 2016 draft was the addition of a “New Roles and Changing Landscapes” heading, which emphasizes the role of LES in promoting equitable change.
accordance with ALA’s core values. Approved at LES’s virtual Midwinter meeting in February, this updated strategic plan is a revised and expanded version of a draft that was begun 2016, and is based upon ACRL Plan for Excellence (http://www.ala.org/acrl/aboutacrl/strategicplan/stratplan) as revised in 2019. The new Strategic Plan focuses on four headings derived from the Plan for Excellence: “The Value of Literature Librarianship,” “Student Learning,” “Research and Scholarly Environment,” and “New Roles and Changing Landscapes.”

Beneath these headings, the plan defines goals and objectives that update and build upon LES’s previous strategic plans. For example, the new plan proposes building upon LES’s successful relationship-building with the MLA by considering partnerships with professional organizations linked to composition and creative writing. It also encourages LES to support and implement the section’s newly-developed Research Competency Standards, while increasing LES support for digital humanities and interdisciplinary visual, material, and maker approaches to literature and culture.

A key update to the 2016 draft was the addition of a “New Roles and Changing Landscapes” heading, which emphasizes the role of LES in promoting equitable change: “LES recognizes and fosters reflection and change in literary studies and the library profession.” Objectives in this category include upholding ACRL’s advocacy for the full range of the academic library workforce, supporting LES members as advocates for diversity, equity, and inclusion, and working to decolonize academic libraries and higher education environments. Intended to be revised or updated prior to 2025, the LES Strategic Plan 2020 is designed as a container for new policy initiatives, and to be responsive to changes resulting from the ongoing SCOE review of ALA and ACRL practices and organizational structures.

**LES Community Agreement**

In spring 2020, the Planning Committee began work on an LES Community Agreement, modeled on similar agreements adopted by other ACRL sections in order to promote welcoming and inclusive communicative norms. These agreements promote anti-oppressive in-person and online communications, by encouraging meeting participants to actively prevent and disrupt harassment or exclusionary behavior, and by establishing procedures for responding as a section in instances when these foundational norms are violated.

The LES Community Agreement especially draws upon the agreement created in 2019 by the ACRL Digital Scholarship Section. Like that agreement, the LES Community Agreement is intended to be invoked at the commencement of in-person and online meetings, as a reminder to attendees regarding our shared expectations for conversation participants: for example, that participants should leave room for others, engage in active listening, and “practice allyship, and engage as active bystanders,” if they observe exclusionary or oppressive power dynamics at work in the discussion, such as when members of privileged groups exclude or diminish others based on factors such as race, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, or disability.

In addition to laying out expectations for participants in LES events, the Community Agreement also provides those who are subjected to or witness a violation of our expectations with ways to engage LES as an ally in responding to the situation. Under the community agreement, LES will make available
an online tool for communicating violations, and a procedure for handling these reports. Alternately, any LES member can directly contact any member of the LES Executive or Membership Committees to report a violation. The agreement also provides examples of potential Executive Committee responses to harassing, oppressive, or exclusionary behaviors, ranging from attempting conflict resolution to potentially banning an individual from future LES events, or publishing an account of their behavior. This agreement was discussed by the LES Executive Committee during its 2020 virtual summer session, and is set for further discussion and potential approval at the LES midwinter meeting in 2021.

While community agreements are limited tools, we view them as useful in promoting norms of communication that should accompany the systemic changes needed to promote greater equity, diversity, and inclusion in LES and elsewhere.

In the 2020-2021 academic year, the Planning Committee (Sherri Brown, Camille Cooper, Mark Dahlquist (Chair), Priscilla J. Finley, Brian Flota (ex-officio), Nancy Foasberg (ex-officio), Amanda Rybin Koob, and Emily Spunagel) looks forward to reviewing the LES Governance Procedures and to supporting LES and librarianship in English literatures in developing along lines that are innovative, inclusive, and socially just. If you have suggestions for the Planning Committee, we hope you’ll contact us and share your observations and ideas.

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**Member News**

New position? Retiring? Did you receive a grant or publish something? We want to know!

Send your updates to biblionotes@gmail.com for the next newsletter.
Anti-Racist Action Plan Ad Hoc Committee

In June, the Literatures in English Section came out in active support of the ALA Black Caucus’s Statement on Racial Violence condemning the death of George Floyd at the hands of Minneapolis police officers, and encouraged members to take action against racial injustice. At the same time, recognizing there is a need for actions and not only words, the LES Executive Committee put out a call for folks to serve on an ad hoc committee to develop an anti-racist action plan for the Section. The committee was formed in July, and we began meeting in August.

The committee clarified its charge to be as follows:

The [Anti-Racist] Action Plan Ad Hoc Committee’s goal is to create an action plan to integrate anti-racist practices into the operations of the Literatures in English Section. After reviewing and critically reflecting on existing documentation and practice, we will make recommendations towards anti-racist practices and policies. Through this process, we anticipate we will identify ways LES can support our membership in their own spheres of influence, and will note those areas of focus for later action. Throughout this process, the committee will check in with the LES Executive Committee and seek feedback from the section more generally. As a living document, this action plan will include recommendations for its own continuous review as well as the creation of resources and policies.

Currently the committee is gathering documents and records, and reviewing both formal and informal practices to identify possible recommendations for interventions. So far we are reviewing the past five years of publications (BiblioNotes, website), marketing and member recruitment, social media activity, and volunteer recruitment practices as well as administrative documents such as the strategic plan. In addition, we are reaching out to other ACRL Sections and Round Tables to share ideas and find points of mutual interest.

We invite input and recommendations for any materials you think we should consider in our internal environmental scan, as well as tools that can help LES toward our goals as we look inward for ways to improve our own practices. Please contact Nancy Foasberg (nfoasberg@qc.cuny.edu) with suggestions or questions.

Your committee members,

Nancy Foasberg, GUNY Queens College
Brian Flota, James Madison University
Cathy Troupos, Wheaton College (IL)
Amanda Rybin Koob, University of Colorado Boulder
Ginny Moran, Macalester College
Natalie Ornat, University of North Carolina - Charlotte
Kristin Nielsen, University of Georgia
Developing a Diversity Audit for an Academic Library Collection

Aimee Gee

When the Literatures in English Section met during ALA 2020, we briefly discussed strategies for developing more inclusive literary collections. During this meeting, I shared a few words about my experience in a three-week Library Journal professional development course, titled “Evaluating, Auditing, and Diversifying Your Collections.” Participants in the course reflected on ways that various forms of privilege can hinder efforts to diversify library collections, learned about reading lists and review sources for identifying diverse books, and devised plans for conducting diversity audits of existing collections based on Karen Jensen’s model (2017).

As a literature selector for a large academic library, I aim to strike a balance between providing the traditional canonical texts studied in survey courses and introducing new and experimental works by a wide variety of authors. Despite my best intentions and efforts, in the absence of quantitative measures, it is difficult to say whether my library’s collections are diverse or even how diverse they should be. A diversity audit, a type of inventory designed to determine the amount of diversity in a collection, is one means of assessing one’s collection development activities. Although my remote work environment during the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic has prevented me from going into the stacks to carry out my assessment, I can share my process for developing a plan.

As a first step in developing an audit plan, course participants considered questions about their institutional and community context, such as:

- How equitable is your library or institution?
- What demographic data and statistics can you use to evaluate your service community?
- Who is ignored or missing in those data sets?

In order to tailor my audit to the makeup of the university community, I turned to the demographic data about students, faculty members, and staff that my institution collects. It was easy to find data on the race and ethnicity of university community members, as well as on low-income students, first-generation college students, and Veterans among the undergraduate population. I quickly learned that without the large number of international students, faculty, and staff, the U.S.-born university community is less ethnically and racially diverse than the country as a whole. I also learned that there was no available data on those identifying as LGBTQ+ or those with declared disabilities. Furthermore, gender was recorded in only binary terms. For these populations, I would need to depend on publicly available data from the U.S. Census and the Williams Institute.

The next set of considerations for developing the audit plan included the following methodological questions:

- Will you look at your entire collection or perform a smaller “snapshot”?
- Which collection/collections will you be focusing
your efforts on?

• What criteria will you use to evaluate holdings?
• What are your goals?

Realistically, it would be impossible for me to conduct an audit on a literature collection of over 300,000 volumes single-handedly. In order to impose some reasonable limits on the project, I chose to focus my first efforts on only the Library of Congress classes in the collection that represent American literature published after the year 2000: PS229-231, PS3600-3626, and PZ (Juvenile belles lettres). Within these areas, I plan to assess the collection to determine whether the representation of authors and subjects corresponds with the diversity within the university community.

I have generated a shelf list of the appropriate titles for the collection evaluation feature in my library’s ILS. In the title list spreadsheet, I will tally titles that address the categories I have identified in order to gather quantitative data. Additionally, I will make notes to generate qualitative observations of trends and distinctions within and across these categories. For example, I’m interested in learning about representations of undocumented people in the U.S., of different types of disabilities (including chronic illness and mental illness), and of various gender identities.

Beyond the first stage of this project, I aspire to build a collection that surpasses my initial targets. In expanding my audit to literatures in English, I will need to consider the proportion of titles representing postcolonial nations and territories in relation to the size of the entire 21st-century English-language literature collection. I will need to think about the different ethnic, racial, and religious groups within those nations and territories, some of which are different from those in the United States. I will also try to determine whether the representation of literatures in languages other than English from the same time period corresponds with the international population within the university community.

I expect to find serious gaps in representation, but more than that, I expect to learn a lot about the diversity of authors and subject matter that does exist within the collection. As a result, I’ll be better equipped to promote and share these books. In order to begin addressing the gaps I am sure to discover, I continue to seek out titles that represent the experiences of poor and working-class people, migrants and refugees, and other underrepresented groups. I also promote the library’s means of patron-driven acquisition to the university community, as they help to democratize the work of collection development.

**References**


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Librarian to the Rescue

April K. Miller

We have all had that email or phone call, “Hi, I need help with ‘this’ for my English class. Can you come talk to them about it?” Of course, we say yes because that is what we do and who we are. As information professionals, it is not within us to turn down a reasonable request. This happened to me recently and it became so much more than I originally thought it would be.

On a Thursday afternoon, I received a phone call from a fellow librarian on the main campus of our university. (I work on a branch campus.) He told me he had given my name to a faculty member, Dr. K, who was looking for some help with an assignment in her English Composition II classes. He told me he thought I would be perfect to help her since I am good at “design stuff.” Friday, I received an email from Dr. K asking if I could give a talk on infographics: what they are and how to make them. She wanted her classes to make infographic posters to enter into the Oklahoma Research Day, which was being held at our university this year. I told her I would be happy to help and asked her a few more questions. While waiting on her response to my questions, I began some initial research on infographics.

Monday, I received another e-mail from Dr. K with the answers to the questions I asked. This is when I found out that she wanted the infographic session to be taught that week to her classes. I explained to Dr. K that I had not taught on this exact topic before and will need time to create the information. This allowed me to push her teach date from Wednesday to Friday of that week. For the next two days, I worked furiously to put together a PowerPoint on infographics and the basics of design especially for posters. By Wednesday morning, I felt that I had a well-rounded and complete presentation.

During this process, I mentioned to another faculty member, Ms. T, what I was working to complete. She came into the library early Wednesday morning and asked if I would like to “practice” my presentation on her Radiologic Technology students. She was very interested in the topic since her students create posters for a convention that she encourages them to attend. I told her that I would be happy to present my lesson if she would just let me know when it worked for her with her lesson plans. She answered immediately, “Oh in about 15 minutes.” Even with the extreme short notice, I gave the presentation to her class. This opportunity enabled me to streamline my presentation.

Friday, I went to the main campus to give my
presentation to Dr. K’s English Composition II classes. My lesson presented a wide variety of content, which overjoyed the professor. The students were also very receptive to my presentation and asked thoughtful questions. I even had one student reach out to me to help them discover images for their poster before they entered it into the Oklahoma Research Day.

Sometimes last minute requests turn out to be so much more. I now have a good working relationship with Dr. K, with whom I would not usually interact in my day-to-day work. Regarding my relationship with Ms. T, it is even stronger as she too was very happy with my presentation to her students. Additionally, I helped the Radiology students even more than I usually do with their posters. Due to my presentation in their class, I had several students send their posters to me to review for design pointers before the competition at their convention. This meant the world to me. It is always great when someone recognizes a skill you have and appreciates you for it. I love helping students and design, so being able to do both made my day.

Sometimes it is good to be the librarian who is good at “design stuff.”

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ACRL Books

ACRL publishes a range of books to assist academic librarians in developing their professional careers, managing their institutions, and increasing their awareness of developments in librarianship, providing timely, thought-provoking, and practical content and research to academic and research librarians worldwide. Some recent titles:

*Get the Job: Academic Library Hiring for the New Librarian*

*Sharing Spaces and Students: Employing Students in Collaborative Partnerships*

*Hidden Architectures of Information Literacy Programs: Structures, Practices, and Contexts*

*The Engaged Library: High-Impact Educational Practices in Academic Libraries*

*Games and Gamification in Academic Libraries*

Interested in writing for ACRL? Contact Erin Nevius, ACRL’s Content Strategist, at enevius@ala.org for more information, or visit [www.al.org/acrl/publications/publishing](http://www.al.org/acrl/publications/publishing) to learn more about our book publishing program and submit a proposal.

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ACRL 2021 is going virtual!

ACRL invites you to share your research and creative endeavors with your colleagues at the ACRL 2021 Virtual Conference. Today’s higher education environment calls for innovative ways to support student, faculty, and institution success. Submit your ideas for presentation at the ACRL 2021 Virtual Conference, where we will explore the theme Ascending into An Open Future. Through the work of talented library workers like you, and ACRL’s commitments to equitable and open scholarship as well as equity, diversity and inclusion, today’s academic and research libraries are providing more open and inclusive collections and services. Share your ideas with your colleagues as we work together for an open future.

The deadline for Lightning Talk, Poster, Roundtable, TechConnect, Webcast submissions has been extended to Monday, November 9. As a reminder of the new Participation Limits, all submitters (even those that already submitted in the spring) are eligible to be included as a presenter or co-presenter on a maximum of two additional proposals for the revised fall submission deadline, and can ultimately present a maximum of two times during the ACRL Conference.

More details about the ACRL 2021 Virtual Conference, including the full Call for Participation, are online at https://conference.acrl.org/callforparticipation/.

ACRL Diversity Alliance – Join or Renew for 2021!

The ACRL Diversity Alliance program unites academic libraries committed to increasing the hiring pipeline of qualified and talented individuals from underrepresented racial and ethnic groups. By working together and thinking more broadly, ACRL Diversity Alliance institutions will help diversify and thereby enrich the profession. The commitment of each library leader to create one or more residency positions will expand the opportunities available to individuals from professionally underrepresented groups to gain knowledge, skills, and competencies necessary to thrive in an academic context. Renewals will go out this fall for 2020 institutional members. If your institution is not a current member and you’re interested in joining the ACRL Diversity Alliance, please contact ACRL Program Manager for Strategic Initiatives Allison Payne at apayne@ala.org.