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BUILDING AN EQUITABLE, DIVERSE, AND INCLUSIVE FUTURE:

An Examination of U.S. Academic Library Leadership Job Advertisements

Ngoc-Yen Tran and Emily K. Chan*

INTRODUCTION

The killing and death of George Floyd and other racially charged events have instigated academic libraries to critically examine their structures and processes, and begin the hard and complex work to adopt a more inclusive lens when creating collections, spaces, and practices. Indeed, many academic institutions and university libraries have begun to apply equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) ideals to their services, resources, and functions in order to work towards a more equitable, diverse, and inclusive environment.

It is generally recognized that this work requires sustained focus and attention by all library employees. However, for these processes to be ingrained and embedded in organizational culture, commitment and leadership from senior-level library administrators are necessary. Library deans, directors, and university librarians are in a unique position to integrate these critical EDI efforts as top administrators for academic libraries. As a result, it is important to take a critical look at job expectations for these academic leadership positions to better understand how academic libraries' focus on EDI efforts may be reflected in the recruitment of top administrators, who often serve as change agents for these initiatives. This contributed paper will describe a study exploring the frequency of EDI responsibilities identified in job advertisements for senior-level library leaders in the twelve months before and the thirteen months after the murder of Mr. Floyd in May 2020.

LITERATURE REVIEW

A survey of the literature reveals that while discussions of EDI in libraries are abundant, there is limited research and scholarship that have focused on content analyses of library and information science (LIS) job advertisements to identify qualifications and responsibilities related to EDI. This contributed paper may help to fill this gap.

One recent study examining roles and responsibilities of cataloging managers indicated that EDI responsibilities are emerging but may perhaps be a given for people in this type of role.[1] Examples of qualifications provided in the study included: "Ability to use knowledge, experience, awareness, and skills to advance [school's] commitment to diversity and inclusion, and to engage effectively with a broad spectrum of culturally diverse group," and "Demonstrated experience working in and fostering a diverse faculty, staff, and student environment or commitment to do so as a faculty member at [school]."[2]

* *Ngoc-Yen Tran, Coordinator for Teaching and Learning, Seattle University, yentran@seattleu.edu; Emily K. Chan, Associate Dean for Research and Scholarship, San José State University, emily.chan@sjsu.edu*

The 2022 snapshot report of information professionals career trends released by the San José State University School of Information also confirmed EDI commitment as one of their four major trends. In their random sampling of 400 job advertisements, 45% of the postings included EDI as a required or preferred skill for applicants. Additionally, the 2022 report stated that this focus on EDI was a continuation from their 2021 snapshot report, and it encouraged job seekers to think about how their current and future work would contribute to equity, diversity, and inclusion activities.[3]

It is apparent through a survey of the literature that EDI is of interest to LIS employers and is becoming increasingly reflective in LIS positions through qualifications or responsibilities. At this point, studies have not analyzed job descriptions for top academic library administrators for their EDI emphases.

METHODS

A spreadsheet of job advertisements posted to ALA JobLIST spanning summer 2006 to summer 2021 was obtained from ALA. For this study, only job advertisements posted between June 2019 and June 2021 were included. This time frame coincided with jobs posted preceding and after the murder of Mr. Floyd on May 25, 2020, as that particular event and its aftermath propelled libraries to adopt a more inclusive lens when creating collections, spaces, and practices. Only academic library positions in the US were included in the study. Positions were restricted to library deans, library directors, university librarians, and other senior-level positions with oversight of the library such as provost or president, or were a combination of roles (e.g., university librarian and dean). Senior-level academic library leaders were chosen because they are in a unique position to provide leadership in EDI efforts. Middle management library positions at the assistant or associate levels or directorships of units or departments were excluded. Table 1 lists the data set inclusion criteria.

TABLE 1

List of data set inclusion criteria

Criteria Utilized to Determine Inclusion in the Data Set	
Source	ALA JobLIST data
Position Title	Dean, Director, University Librarian, Provost, President
Time Frame	Posted between June 2019–June 2021
Geographic Location	United States
Library Type	Academic Library

In cases where institutions advertised multiple times for the same position, the most recent job posting was retained and analyzed, regardless if the job advertisements were renewals/extensions or were published months apart. After removing the duplicates, 121 job advertisements remained. Each of the 121 job advertisements represented a unique institution's most recent attempt to advertise for a senior-level administrator to lead the campus library.

The eligible job advertisements were subsequently reviewed and analyzed for mention of responsibilities or qualifications related to EDI. Three broad, author-created EDI responsibilities categories were identified: (1) Library Workforce, (2) Library Organizational Culture, and (3) Supporting Campus EDI Initiatives. Table 2 provides context on the authors' analyses.

The job advertisements were then reviewed and analyzed for mention of responsibilities related to EDI among two comparator sets. The first set (hereafter referred to as "pre-Floyd") was inclusive of the 12 months that preceded the murder of Mr. Floyd, including his May 2020 death. His murder and its aftermath were seen as time-based catalysts for libraries' critical examination of their collections, spaces, and practices through an inclusive lens. June 2020 marked the start date of the second set, which was inclusive of the following 13 months after Mr. Floyd's death (hereafter referred to as "post-Floyd"). Job advertisements that were posted between June

TABLE 2

Author-created EDI responsibilities categories, included duties, examples, and scope notes

EDI Responsibilities Category	Included Duties	Posting Example	Scope Note
Library Workforce	Recruitment, development, retention, or management of a diverse workforce	"Support institutional and college diversity and inclusion including recruitment and retention of diverse faculty, staff, and students"	This category acknowledged the importance of diverse library personnel, as well as their continued and collective professional development in areas of EDI.
Library Organizational Culture	Centering EDI into the library's culture or cultivating an inclusive organizational culture	"Foster an organizational climate committed to respect, transparency, service, results, teamwork, diversity, inclusion, and innovation"	This category reflected the need to have the library's organizational culture reflect and emulate EDI values.
Supporting Campus EDI Initiatives	Providing vision, planning, and implementing library activities or initiatives that meet the University's strategic EDI efforts to create an educational climate that promotes or celebrates EDI, or meets diverse community or stakeholder needs	"Create a vision and plan to advance the mission of the university and library system by building upon a strong legacy of growth and excellence to provide innovative services to a diverse population of patrons, organizations, and communities"	This category focused on responsibilities that would impact the larger campus constituents (e.g., faculty, staff, and students) and their academic and educational outcomes, and were in alignment with the University's overall mission and EDI objectives.

2019 and May 2020 constitute the pre-Floyd data set, while those posted between June 2020 and June 2021 constitute the post-Floyd data set.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

One hundred twenty-one (121) job advertisements meeting the inclusion criteria were posted between June 2019 and June 2021 and were analyzed as part of this study. Forty-two states and the District of Columbia were represented in the data set. Various position titles were represented across the 121 job advertisements (table 3). "Other" is inclusive of titles that were combinations of Dean, University Librarian, and Vice Provosts or Associate Vice Presidents.

TABLE 3

Distribution of positions by title

Position Title (n=121)	Number	%
Dean	53	44%
Director	42	35%
University Librarian	10	8%
Other	16	13%

Among the 121 job advertisements, sixty-one (61) were posted pre-Floyd (between June 2019 and May 2020) and sixty (60) were posted post-Floyd (between June 2020 and June 2021). Of those 61 pre-Floyd job postings, 16 or 26% indicated that the top library administrator would have some sort of EDI responsibilities. This is

in contrast to the post-Floyd data set, where 30 (50%) job advertisements stated an EDI responsibility (table 4). This almost 100% increase could be interpreted as an indicator of the increased importance of EDI in libraries and the campus' signaling to potential candidates of the institutions' values.

TABLE 4

Distribution of eligible job advertisements by date and EDI responsibilities

	June 2019–May 2020 (n=61) "Pre-Floyd" data set		June 2020–June 2021 (n=60) "Post-Floyd" data set	
	Responsibilities Included EDI	**No EDI Responsibilities Mentioned**	**Responsibilities Included EDI**	**No EDI Responsibilities Mentioned**
Job Postings	16 (26%)	45 (74%)	30 (50%)	30 (50%)

Position Titles

Further analysis was carried out related to position titles and EDI responsibilities (table 5). When viewing the distribution across the two time periods, it is clear that there were gains in EDI responsibilities at the "Dean" and "Director" positions after Mr. Floyd's murder. The other two categories – "University Librarian" and "Other" – also had high frequencies of EDI responsibilities in the latter time period, but their small sample sizes precluded the drawing of any strong conclusions. However, the data would seem to indicate an increased representation of EDI responsibilities for most senior-level library administrators in job postings after the death of Mr. Floyd.

TABLE 5

Distribution of positions by title and EDI responsibilities preceding and after the murder of Mr. Floyd

Position Title	June 2019–May 2020 "Pre-Floyd" data set		June 2020–June 2021 "Post-Floyd" data set	
	Yes/EDI	**No**	**Yes/EDI**	**No**
Dean (n= 53)	8 (28%)	21 (72%)	18 (75%)	6 (25%)
Director (n=42)	1 (6%)	16 (94%)	6 (24%)	19 (76%)
University Librarian (n=10)	2 (29%)	5 (71%)	2 (67%)	1 (33%)
Other (n=16)	5 (63%)	3 (38%)	4 (50%)	4 (50%)

EDI Responsibilities

The job advertisements were further analyzed for the presence of three author-created EDI responsibilities categories. Sixteen pre-Floyd job advertisements and 30 post-Floyd advertisements included EDI responsibilities. This was almost a two-fold increase in the representation of EDI responsibilities in post-Floyd senior library administrator job advertisements, despite the overall sample sizes being similar (61 and 60, respectively).

Table 6 displays the distribution of EDI responsibilities among the smaller pre-Floyd and post-Floyd data sets. In the pre-Floyd data set, 2 job advertisements, or 13%, identified "Library Workforce" as a priority EDI responsibility. This is in contrast to the 10 post-Floyd job advertisements (or 33%) where this EDI responsibility was noted. There were 7 (44%) job advertisements in the pre-Floyd data set and 13 (43%) advertisements in the post-Floyd data set that identified "Library Organizational Culture" as an EDI responsibility. Thirteen, or 81%, of job advertisements pre-Floyd and 23, or 77%, job advertisements post-Floyd identified "Supporting Campus EDI Initiatives" as a responsibility for the senior-level library administrator.

When comparing the two sets of data, there were increases in overall raw numbers and one relative frequency across the three EDI responsibilities categories after the death of Mr. Floyd.

TABLE 6

Areas of focus among job advertisements with EDI responsibilities

EDI Responsibilities Category	June 2019–May 2020 (n=16) "Pre-Floyd" data set		June 2020–June 2021 (n=30) "Post-Floyd" data set	
	Yes	No	Yes	No
Library Workforce	2 (13%)	14 (88%)	10 (33%)	20 (67%)
Library Organizational Culture	7 (44%)	9 (56%)	13 (43%)	17 (57%)
Supporting Campus EDI Initiatives	13 (81%)	3 (19%)	23 (77%)	7 (23%)

In the post-Floyd data set, the "Supporting Campus EDI Initiatives" category appeared most frequently (n=23 or 77%). The next most frequently observed category was "Library Organizational Culture" followed by "Library Workforce." The most notable post-Floyd increase – in both count and relative frequency – was the "Library Workforce" category, despite the lowest overall observed count. These gains would seem to indicate a greater emphasis on recruiting, developing, retaining, and managing a diverse workforce after May 2020. Also included in this area was an expectation for library leaders to provide general professional development in understanding the importance of EDI topics and concerns.

Higher counts were observed in the post-Floyd data set for both "Library Organizational Culture" and "Supporting Campus EDI Initiatives" categories. Their relative percentages, however, remained largely similar to the observed percentages in the pre-Floyd data set. This indicated sustained interest and responsibilities for creating an inclusive library organizational culture and supporting campus EDI initiatives, and the acknowledgment that library leaders are in a unique position to support these aims.

The post-Floyd data set would seem to indicate a short-term increase of EDI responsibilities among top library administrator job positions in the areas of cultivating an effective workforce, building an inclusive library organization, and supporting larger, campus EDI initiatives.

LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE STUDIES

A significant limitation of the study is that the analysis focused solely on the available data from the ALA JobLIST data set. Full job advertisements were not always captured in ALA JobLIST data; some descriptions and qualifications were short with an external link to view the full position. Positions also instructed applicants to contact higher education executive search firms for further information. Due to the time delay (there is a one-year embargo on ALA JobLIST data) and the inconsistencies in data availability of older job postings, this paper restricted all analysis to what was available in the ALA JobLIST set. Thus, the ALA JobLIST data may be incomplete when compared to the actual advertisements on college/university websites. Furthermore, job postings' length, general comprehensiveness, and the degree to which ALA JobLIST data fields were completed varied significantly across the data set. It is unknown as to who submitted the job postings to ALA JobLIST (e.g., someone in the library, someone at the institution not associated with the library, or an external entity hired by the library or institution to post to various job boards); involvement of someone unattuned to the library's specific needs could potentially lead to a loss of fidelity or detail. These limiting factors are acknowledged, and the authors did not seek additional information beyond what was shared on the ALA JobLIST posting since many were inaccessible since their original posting.

One future study may be to investigate elements that were beyond the scope of this project, including the character of the institution (e.g., Carnegie classification, geographic location, minority-serving institution status, domestic and international student populations, private or public status, etc.) and their potential connections to the three author-defined categories of EDI responsibilities sought among academic library leaders (Library

Workforce, Library Organizational Culture, and Supporting Campus EDI Initiatives). These different factors related to the character of the institution may have an impact on the duties and responsibilities of senior-level library leaders.

The authors recommend further tracking of job postings to see if observed EDI trends in higher education continue. As institutions proceed in their discussions and prioritization of EDI efforts, there are concerns that there could actually be an opposite, pendulum effect against EDI values. This response or backlash can be seen in states where there are growing worries that institutions of higher education have a destructive ideology and possess partisan agendas.[4] Thus, while this study only focused on 12-13 months prior to and immediately after the death of Mr. Floyd, it will be important to see if there will be greater, long-term impacts to higher education, general EDI initiatives, and their subsequent influences on the responsibilities, qualifications, and manner in which library administrator positions are advertised.

CONCLUSION

As evidenced from analyzed ALA JobList data, there was an increase of EDI responsibilities sought among academic library leaders in the year after the death of Mr. Floyd when compared to the preceding year's percentage generally and across the three author-identified EDI responsibilities categories. This would seem to indicate that there could be a greater focus on EDI in libraries and in the search for library leaders after the nationwide introspection on race and systemic injustices.

The topic of EDI in higher education is a quickly evolving topic. In fact, in recent months, some state legislatures, governors, and state governing boards have begun to implement laws, policies, or practices that will significantly impact the future of EDI in higher education. Undoubtedly, these actions will have an effect on EDI initiatives in higher education and their integration into hiring procedures, mission and vision statements, and general institutional practices. EDI initiatives should be monitored as their legitimacy and centrality to higher education institutions' foci may be further interrogated. Library impacts remain to be seen, but this paper would seem to indicate that libraries are responding to diversify and develop their workforce, improve their organizational cultures, and support larger campus initiatives.

NOTES

1. Sian Brannon, Catherine Sassen, and Kevin Yanowski, "Roles and responsibilities of cataloging managers: an updated study of job advertisements," *Technical Services Quarterly* 39, no. 1 (2022): 33.
2. Brannon et al, "Roles and responsibilities," 33.
3. San José State University School of Information, "MLIS skills at work: A snapshot of job postings spring 2022," School of Information, San José State University, accessed February 1, 2023, https://ischool.sjsu.edu/lis-career-trends-report.
4. Kim Parker, "The growing partisan divide in views of higher education," Pew Research Center, August 19, 2019, https://www.pewresearch.org/social-trends/2019/08/19/the-growing-partisan-divide-in-views-of-higher-education-2/

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