Quiz 1 Response

INFO 204: Information Professions

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Why do different interpretations of LIS history exist?

Different interpretations of LIS history exist primarily because there are different people telling the story. These chroniclers discuss the history of libraries from a variety of viewpoints, and therefore present the subject in different lights. Many choose to paint with more favorable brushes, putting forth such interpretations as libraries as public forms, spaces for children, or common spaces designed (intentionally or otherwise) to build and support communities. While these views of LIS history are valid, they often overlook the darker, yet still present, aspects. LIS history, after all is human history. It therefore parallels the parts of our past that many would rather sweep under the rug, like discrimination, segregation, and censorship. Indeed, the perspective of the library as a wondrous and perfect establishment can be dangerously blinding to LIS professionals. In the end, though there are many interpretations of LIS history, it is up to us, as today's information professionals, to take these views in aggregate. To learn from the mistakes of the past, but not wallow in those failures to the point of stagnation.

Why must we do work now to resolve diversity issues present in the library and information field?

Today, it is of increasing importance to work to resolve diversity issues in the library and information field for two main reasons. The first of these is that in the past, our track record is far from spotless. Censoring titles that would promote diversity and passively standing by while branches were segregated leave a lot to be desired. After acknowledging the mistakes of our predecessors, we must take steps to not repeat them.

Secondly, it is essential to make strides to resolve diversity issues so that we are not hamstrung by preconceived notions of what the library 'should be.' At its heart, the library is a community space, a common grounds. The people who use it are, and will forever be, the experts on what they need. It is not our job to prescribe what they should do in our branches - we just need to provide the space and resources to enable them. Obviously, this comes with limits - library policy is not crafted without reason. But by embracing more diverse voices, we can attune our libraries to what our patrons are truly looking for.