

LCHS DEI Statement and Action Plan (Final)

“Do the best you can until you know better. Then when you know better, do better.”
-- Maya Angelou

Preface

As described in its [first “Welcome from the Editors.”](#) *Libraries: Culture, History, and Society* (LCHS) arose from an impulse to “restore the human experience to something that is often described and studied as a thing” (iv). Within and through the journal, the editors wanted to empower people and advance conversations about libraries by promoting diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI). Volume 1, number 1, and most issues since then, have contained articles about gender and race because LCHS aims to help colleagues and the wider public understand the “struggle of diverse constituencies to be welcomed, heard, and respected, within and by our profession” (LCHS 1, no. 1, x).

DEI is only partially achieved, however, when LCHS publishes material *about* previously-excluded groups. Just as important, perhaps more so, is publishing material written *by, with, and for* those groups. Only when people of diverse backgrounds are well-represented on LCHS’s Editorial Board, in its reviewer database, in its tables of contents, and in its subscriber list, and the library history discipline has allowed previously-excluded voices to transform how the discipline has been traditionally defined and practiced, may we be able to collectively claim that everyone is welcomed, heard, and respected.

With considerable intellectual and cultural humility, the Editors, Editorial Board, Reviewers, and other LCHS Contributors rededicate ourselves to honoring the human-centeredness that was the journal’s initial guiding star. This involves ensuring that LCHS engages all potential collaborators, enables them, treats them equitably, and includes diverse content. We offer the following statement to express the journal’s values, to be transparent about its approaches, and to hold its Editors, Editorial Board, Reviewers, and Contributors accountable for making meaningful, tangible progress in this vital and ongoing work. We welcome feedback and suggestions from anyone who reads this document (to get in touch, please e-mail LCHS@press.psu.edu).

DEI and Library History Scholarship

Diversity, equity, and inclusion are essential to quality, progress, and relevance in any field, but especially in historical endeavors. As the [American Historical Association](#), [the Association of University Presses](#), the editors of [Digital Humanities Quarterly](#), and other leading and cutting-edge entities have noted, DEI shapes the scopes of disciplines by defining the topics, methods, and authors that comprise them. DEI encourages researchers to think more deeply about epistemology, theory, models, methods, and sources. Comparative data offer firmer confirmations, greater complexity, and new insights. Thus diverse authors and perspectives contribute intellectually to the field. Scholarship would be significantly weakened without them.

LCHS was fortunate to be born at a time when some library historians were already showing interest in studying and/or reading about women; Black, Indigenous, Asian, Latinx/a/o, and other People of Color (BIPOC); immigrants and international conditions; LGBTQ+ communities; the poor; people who are differently-abled; and other identities. Yet if issue after issue of *LCHS* contain few or no contributions written *with* or *by* scholars of the aforementioned populations, then *LCHS* may be contributing to, rather than challenging, inequities in the library history field. Also, to the extent that professional, material, and social rewards may flow from publication in academic journals, *LCHS* may be contributing to economic and other disparities among colleagues and within the wider world. This is intolerable. Thus all who are involved with producing *LCHS* have a responsibility to uncover and address every element of structural sexism, racism, ableism, and other inequities and exclusions in the journal's operations.

LCHS's Scope, Values, and Mission

LCHS is sponsored by the Library History Round Table (LHRT) within the American Library Association (ALA). Diversity is a [Core Value](#) of ALA. The profession's [Code of Ethics](#) includes "dismantl[ing] systemic and individual biases," "confront[ing] inequity and oppression," "enhanc[ing] diversity and inclusion," and "advanc[ing] racial and social justice." The association calls upon its members to recruit and enable the career progression of diverse people in our profession; combat racism, prejudice, stereotyping, and discrimination; remove barriers to library and information services; provide training and supplemental support toward these ends; enable wide participation in decision-making processes; and be responsive to the communities they serve.¹ Thus *LCHS* is committed to centering and enhancing DEI in all its practices -- not just *what* it publishes, but *who* and *how* it publishes.

As stated on the journal's [website](#), which was created in 2016, *LCHS* "aims to study libraries within their broader historical, humanistic, and social contexts." When the founding Editors first articulated the publication's scope, they primarily thought in terms of cross-disciplinary research,

¹ Paraphrased from [ALA Policy Manual, section A.1.5](#) and [sections B.3, B.3.1.-B.3.3.](#)

including not only History, English, Sociology, etc., but also Gender/Women's Studies and Race/Ethnic Studies.

Yet because people are individuals, DEI is extremely complex, and understandings of identity and DEI continue to evolve, the Editors, Editorial Board, Reviewers, and other Contributors now acknowledge that the unspoken values of empathy; humility, community-building; partnership; opportunity creation and sharing; honesty; transparency; continuous learning; acknowledging and learning from mistakes; respect; thoughtfulness; responsiveness; leaning-in toward social justice; willingness to innovate; and accountability must be centered in all our work. We want to develop a more inclusive understanding of the history of librarianship by shedding light on experiences of individuals and groups that are often excluded from histories of library institutions. But beyond producing content that reflects the diversity of library thinkers, practitioners, and users, we also want *LCHS* to be a vehicle for overcoming systemic biases within the library profession, the academy, the publishing world, and society. It can only do so if authors, readers, and their diverse perspectives are honored throughout the scholarly communication cycle -- from the first cultivation of authors and topics; through writing, review, and revision; to final publication and beyond.

Current and Future Actions

Beliefs and words are only meaningful if they are acted upon and they result in the desired outcomes. There are some gaps between the human-centered motivations that prompted the beginning of *LCHS* and what it has published in its first 5 volumes. As of 2021, the journal has produced few research manuscripts written by BIPOC or international scholars beyond the English-language world. It has published few if any manuscripts about children; the elderly; Indigenous/Native communities; LGBTQ+ persons; people with disabilities; religious diversity; or the economically disenfranchised. As new editors, the founders conscientiously turned to other publications as models for best practices, especially for workaday procedures. Implementing past examples, however, may have replicated inequities that are deeply embedded within the scholarly publishing arena. The Editors, Editorial Board, Reviewers, and other Contributors must devise better methods for cultivating and empowering library history authors.

In 2020/2021, the Editors took the following actions to improve DEI in *LCHS*:

- To demonstrate their solidarity, educate themselves, and share opportunities, at least one *LCHS* Co-Editor joined [ACRL-AASLIG](#), [ACRL-WGSS](#), [AILA](#), [ALSC](#), [APALA](#), [BCALA](#), [EMIERT](#), [IRRT](#), [RAINBOW RT](#), [REFORMA](#), and [SRRT](#). If you represent another library-related DEI organization that welcomes allies, please let the Editors know (LCHS@press.psu.edu).
- Expanded *LCHS*'s [Editorial Board](#) to include an additional African American member and an Indigenous/Native member. Added other board members whose scholarship includes African American and international library history.

- Partnered with [Nicole A. Cooke](#) to publish a special issue (v. 6, n. 1) on Black Female Librarians. Dr. Cooke has done tremendous work in developing the contents, which will include up to 12 authors in a double issue.
- Recruited at least 1 BIPOC reviewer for every submission about those populations.
- For all submissions about BIPOC and international populations, authors were strongly encouraged to center BIPOC or international perspectives in their narratives by including primary materials produced by those populations.
- *LCHS* Co-Editor Bernadette A. Lear obtained an appointment and is actively contributing to the Library Publishing Coalition's Ethical Framework for Library Publishing Task Force. The task force's objective is to update and improve a [guidance document](#) that includes significant accessibility and DEI components.

Actions Planned for 2021/2022 and 2022/2023 include:

Greater Inclusion of Diverse Contributors

- *LCHS* Co-Editor Eric C. Novotny is stepping down from journal responsibilities, effective Spring 2024. While the remaining Editor and the Editorial Board will miss him greatly, they are embracing the search for a new Co-Editor as an opportunity to bring different perspectives and energies to the journal. The Editors asked the LHRT Chair to specifically consider DEI in appointing members to the ad hoc *LCHS* Co-Editor Search Committee that has been formed.
- Developing an open mechanism for Editorial Board nominations, in order to recruit new board members beyond the Editors' networks.
- Calling for manuscript reviewers through ALA's DEI-related units, caucuses, and affiliates, to increase the number of BIPOC and international reviewers in the journal's database.
- Exploring possibilities for developing/publicizing a list of library history mentors who can provide intensive consultation, manuscript review, and/or proofreading for new authors and authors for whom English is an additional language.
- Exploring and promoting [AuthorAID](#) and other resources for authors for whom English is an additional language.
- Seeking ways to encourage interracial collaboration between scholars to ensure that BIPOC perspectives, sources, and interpretations are included, especially when white scholars wish to write about BIPOC populations.

More Equitable and Justice-Oriented Journal Operations

- Reviewing *LCHS*'s instructions to authors and instructions to reviewers, to reduce barriers and include more encouragement for diverse authors; to include more advice for eliminating gender, racial, and other biases in analysis and writing; and to include more suggestions for constructive review of manuscripts.
- Reviewing Penn State Press's forthcoming platform for journal hosting and marketing, to ensure that it is accessible to readers with disabilities, and to those using a variety of devices.

- Reviewing Penn State Press's proofreading and metadata procedures, toward including more of the American Psychological Association's suggestions for [Bias-Free Language](#), the [Conscious Style Guide](#), and similar practices (example: consider changing “blind” review to “anonymous” review, and other terminology changes).
- Advocating a name-change policy to Penn State Press, so that newly-married, newly-divorced, transgender, and other persons have greater control over their scholarly identities.
- Making Editorial Manager (*LCHS*'s online submission system) more user-friendly for authors by providing instructions/support for *LCHS* authors, collaborating with Penn State Press to improve customizable features, advocating other changes to the vendor. Improving language tools is especially desirable.
- Exploring membership in the Committee on Publishing Ethics (COPE) and other publishing organizations, to receive further training and engage in conversations about journal and scholarly ethics.

Improved Transparency and Accountability

- Developing and publicizing written qualifications for Editorial Board selection.
- Using the journal's website, Google Drive, or another, accessible platform to make more of *LCHS*'s policies and procedures more transparent to interested parties.
- Including a DEI section in *LCHS*'s annual report to LHRT.
- Revisiting this document by the end of AY 2022/2023 to reflect on progress made/not made, and to revise as necessary.

LCHS Editors, Editorial Board members, Reviewers, and other Contributors will continue to evaluate and reflect upon how our actions further DEI. We are unafraid of admitting our mistakes, changing our minds, and correcting our approaches as needed. We encourage the library history community to hold us accountable and we ask everyone to assist us in helping to end the exclusion, exploitation, racism, white supremacy, sexism, heteronormativity, ableism, classism, and other aspects of historical research and academic publishing that weaken scholarship and harm our colleagues. To share your thoughts, please contact the Editors at LCHS@press.psu.edu.

Acknowledgments

While this document reflects the principles and commitments of the *LCHS* Editors, who take responsibility for implementing it throughout all journal operations, it was influenced by many. Most importantly, Dr. Nicole Cooke, Dr. Dominique Daniel, and Michele Fenton comprised our Writing Group. They shaped each successive draft, greatly improving the final document. They challenged the Editors to think harder, go further, and to focus on actionable items for meaningful change. We thank them for their expertise, encouragement, and insights. We also thank the *LCHS* Editorial Board for their endorsement of this important work. This statement is the beginning, not the end.

We gleaned inspiration, ideas, and language from other organizations' DEI documents. Those looking to examine their own publishing practices should find these resources helpful:

- American Historical Association, "Statement on Diversity and Affirmative Action," <https://www.historians.org/jobs-and-professional-development/statements-standards-and-guidelines-of-the-discipline/statement-on-diversity-and-affirmative-action>.
- American Library Association, "Core Values of Librarianship," <https://www.ala.org/advocacy/intfreedom/corevalues>.
- American Library Association, "Professional Ethics," <https://www.ala.org/tools/ethics>.
- Association of University Presses, "Statement on Equity and Anti-Racism" <https://aupresses.org/about-aupresses/equity-and-antiracism/>.
- Digital Humanities Quarterly, "Statement on Black Lives Matter and Structural Racism" <http://www.digitalhumanities.org/dhq/about/about.html>.
- Library Publishing Coalition, "An Ethical Framework for Library Publishing: Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion" <https://librarypublishing.org/resources/ethical-framework/ethical-framework-diversity/>.
- Oregon Historical Society, "Mission and Vision, Equity and Inclusion" <https://www.ohs.org/about-us/mission-and-vision.cfm>.
- RaceB4Race Editorial Board, "It's Time to End the Publishing Gatekeeping," <https://medium.com/the-sundial-acmrs/its-time-to-end-the-publishing-gatekeeping-75207525f587>.
- University of Minnesota Libraries, "Conducting Research through an Anti-Racism Lens," <https://libguides.umn.edu/antiracism/lens>.

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