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Inclusive and Anti-Racist Collecting at UNLV: Draft Report and Recommendations

Annette Day

University of Nevada, Las Vegas, annette.day@unlv.edu

Sarah R. Jones

University of Nevada, Las Vegas, sarah.jones1@unlv.edu

Amy Tureen

University of Nevada, Las Vegas, amy.tureen@unlv.edu

Susan B. Wainscott

University of Nevada, Las Vegas, sue.wainscott@unlv.edu

Amanda Melilli

University of Nevada, Las Vegas, amanda.melilli@unlv.edu

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Authors

Annette Day, Sarah R. Jones, Amy Tureen, Susan B. Wainscott, Amanda Melilli, Thomas Padilla, and Aidy Weeks

Inclusive and Anti-Racist Collecting at UNLV: Draft Report and Recommendations September 2022

Authors:

Collections Working Group

- Annette Day
- Sarah Jones
- Amy Tureen
- Sue Wainscott

Contributions from previous working group members

- Amanda Melilli
- Thomas Padilla
- Aidy Weeks

The UNLV University Libraries recognizes that as both a direct and indirect result of colonialism and white supremacy the historical and contemporary scholarly publishing market atypically centers and prioritizes voices that are white, male, Christian, able-bodied, and heterosexual (Muka, 2018; Ray, 2018; Baffoe, Asimeng-Boahene, & Buster, 2014; and Buggs, Sims, & Kramer, 2020). In an attempt to redress this imbalance, the UNLV University Libraries is committed to collecting content by and about people and communities that have historically been excluded. This effort includes but is not limited to the intentional collection of materials about and by groups historically excluded by virtue of their ethnicity, race, religion, sexuality, gender, physical ability, mental ability, language, and nationality.

The need for Inclusive and Anti-Racist collections at UNLV

UNLV is designated a Minority-Serving Institution (MSI), a Hispanic-Serving Institution (HSI), and an Asian American and Native American Pacific Islander-Serving Institution (AANAPISI), with approximately 63% of students identifying as a racial or ethnic minority (UNLV, n.d.). UNLV strives to center, embrace, promote, and celebrate the diversity of its environment by providing scholarly content that reflects our students' perspectives, experiences, communities, and history. An essential part of this effort is making resources and tools available to the UNLV community which facilitate awareness, understanding, and empathy for the different lived experiences and viewpoints that are represented on our campus.

Further, as an urban research university, UNLV is embedded in the Southern Nevada region and strives to have positive impacts on the community through engagement, innovation, and enrichment. By utilizing research, educational programs, and community partnerships, UNLV is working to tackle regional issues such as homelessness, domestic violence, children's health and decarceration. Inclusive and anti-racist collections will provide the resources for UNLV

researchers and educators to better understand the communities they are working with in order to facilitate stronger partnerships and long-term successes.

Inclusive and Anti-Racist Collections and UNLV Strategic Goals

These collecting efforts fully align with UNLV's mission and vision as articulated in its [Top Tier 2.0](#) plan. The theme of community partnerships has been discussed above, but work in each core theme area of Top Tier 2.0 (themes listed below) will be strengthened by access to inclusive and anti-racist collections.

- Student Achievement
- Research, Scholarship and Creative Activity
- Academic Health Center
- Socio-Economic Development
- Community Partnerships
- Social Justice, Equity, and Inclusion

These collecting efforts also align with [UNLV Libraries' Strategic Plan](#). The plan articulates a key strategic goal to "Cultivate a welcoming, inclusive environment that values the diverse experiences and needs of our users", with an action item for this goal to "Acquire and showcase inclusive collections that support and document our diverse community".

Aims and Scope of Inclusive and Anti-Racist Collecting at UNLV Libraries

UNLV Libraries will foster a culture of collecting that prioritizes ongoing, thoughtful collection development with an eye to advancing inclusion of historically excluded groups, social justice, and anti-racist precepts. In doing so, it will be essential to establish an understanding that developing a truly inclusive and anti-racist collection cannot rely on automation and algorithms (which inherently replicate the unexplored biases of their makers) and that the extra time and effort necessary to build these collections is inherently valuable and meaningful to the organization.

Inclusive and anti-racist collection building at UNLV will span all collection content types: standard content types such as books, journals, streaming media, databases, and the less traditional formats, which may include user-generated content (Open Educational Resources (OERs), web content, etc.), equipment, and artifacts. We will not create a definitive list of content types to guide collecting, as all types will be in scope. New workflows and new responsibilities may need to be established to acquire the less traditional content.

Inclusive and anti-racist collection building at UNLV will also include intentional collections-based outreach. This may include the development of inclusive and anti-racist focused research guides, displays, special projects, and both internally and externally focused

events. Additionally, the UNLV Libraries will develop a community of practice approach that will provide support, information and resources for library staff to facilitate awareness of and skillsets in inclusive and anti-racist collection building precepts and practices.

This document describes both collection building and outreach development for the general collections, but there may be circumstances where discussion and collaboration with Special Collections and Archives (SCA) will be necessary to determine the best ways to house and provide access to specific content.

Many selectors are already undertaking this work and this report endorses their current and continued efforts and looks to build upon the skills and expertise already in the organization to fully integrate this culture of collecting across the general collections.

The aims in developing these collections are listed below and will serve as a broadly scoped definition of inclusive and anti-racist collecting at UNLV. These aims are not independent of each other and we expect overlapping content to be identified as we work to achieve each aim.

- Support UNLV research and programmatic needs by providing content that aligns with UNLV courses and programs to facilitate knowledge, growth, and understanding of cultural humility, structural racism, white supremacy, heteronormativity, sexism, classism, and other hidden social structures which intentionally or unintentionally invalidate the lived experiences of historically excluded communities.
 - Note: 'Programmatic' is defined as any degree program (not course level), research and support center (e.g. Center for Social Justice), student/faculty organizations which prioritizes people, identities, and communities that have historically been excluded. This will include but is not limited to groups excluded by virtue of their ethnicity, race, religion, sexuality, gender, ability, language, and nationality.
- Provide content to support self-directed learning to facilitate knowledge, growth, and understanding of cultural humility, structural racism, white supremacy, heteronormativity, sexism, classism, ableism, and other hidden social structures which intentionally or unintentionally invalidate the lived experiences of historically excluded communities.
- Provide content that reflects the diverse and constantly changing demographics of the Southern Nevada region. In order for UNLV to achieve its mission of being a "premiere urban research university" and to have a positive and beneficial impact on the region, UNLV faculty, staff, and students need access to content that will help them understand the perspectives, experiences, and histories of their communities. This is a broad aim and may include content created by Southern Nevada authors, content about the Southern Nevada region or content by and/or about individuals whose identities represent the diversity and demographics of Southern Nevada.

- Acquire content from diverse and historically-excluded authors/creators in all disciplines to provide additional perspectives to the white-eurocentric view that is dominant in the academic literature and thus in our general collections.
 - Note: Determining author identity presents challenges and may not be feasible in many collecting scenarios but in order to advance inclusion of historically excluded groups in our collections, this aim should be considered when selecting content. The Community of Practice (see recommendations) will work to develop strategies and guidance to support selectors.
- Utilize collection content vendors that reflect a variety of perspectives, including those not often championed by mainstream publishers and fulfillment services.

Challenges

The Working Group recognizes that there are financial and human resources involved in the commitment to collect content by and about people and communities that have historically been decentered. In terms of human resources, all stakeholders in our collecting workflows will be impacted. Selectors will need to develop more intentional and manual collecting strategies, where previously their collecting may have been largely automated. Acquisitions staff will need to develop relationships with new vendors to source and acquire the content. Discovery Services will receive more materials to catalog as the new content will likely fall outside the record load processes that are in place with our main vendors. Libraries administration will need to fiscally and culturally support the acquisition of new collection development techniques and approaches through both underwriting training and learning and ensuring collections work is properly celebrated in annual reviews, statistics, and other organizational value setting processes.

At this stage it is hard to fully assess both the financial support needed and what the impact will be on staff's existing workloads to develop and sustain this work. The Working Group will ask the Libraries Leadership Team (LLT) to endorse this report and its recommendations. Through that endorsement we expect LLT Division Directors to recognize the need for this work and support their staff in managing their commitments and priorities to participate in this effort.

The Working Group has not established collection-wide benchmarks because disciplinary differences will have a significant impact on the materials available and the complexities involved in identifying those materials. It is not realistic to expect all areas of the general collection to change at the same rate or in the exact same ways. This work will be individualized and goals will be set and outcomes assessed with this understanding. This does not mean that this work is opt-in, all selectors will be expected to engage. But this allows the flexibility for selectors to work with their community of practice (see recommendations), supervisor and collections committee to set applicable benchmarks and establish practices and relevant goals that will integrate this work in achievable ways and in alignment with disciplinary context. The working group understands that there may be concerns that this approach is uneven, and that

measuring progress will be challenging. But the working group believes this approach will facilitate forward momentum and advance a culture that prioritizes thoughtful collection development practices that enable inclusion of historically excluded groups, social justice, and anti-racist precepts.

Recommendations to develop Inclusive and Anti-Racist Collections at UNLV Libraries

- The Collections Committee should oversee and coordinate this work and will charge time-limited working groups to lead and implement specific areas as appropriate.
- The Dean and Library Leadership Team should endorse this report and support their staff in managing their commitments and priorities to participate in developing collections that meet the aims described in the above document.
- UNLV Libraries should not undertake a collection-wide audit to assess for diversity. The literature (Ciszek & Young, 2010; McKinzie, 1994) indicates that this is highly resource intensive with limited utility, particularly for libraries with large collections. Instead it is recommended that an overview and analysis of current collecting practices and methods, led by the Collections Committee should be undertaken. It is our collecting practices - the vendors, publishers, and selection methods we use that enable or limit our ability to develop inclusive collections. Understanding how our current practices do, or do not facilitate our inclusive collecting goals will allow us to identify and implement necessary changes. The decision to not undertake a collection-wide audit does not preclude audits to assess smaller collection subsections.
- An active and collaborative community of practice for content selectors should be established and sustained. This may include resources, information sharing, discussion and training.
- Content Selectors for the general collection should incorporate strategies into their discipline collecting practices to develop collections that fulfill the aims/goals articulated in the above document. This is an ongoing effort and not a finite project. Progress will be incremental and vary from discipline to discipline. Content selectors should utilize as appropriate; input from their community of practice (see recommendations), supervisor and collections committee to develop a realistic annual goal that will enable them to build expertise and knowledge, and contribute to the development of anti-racist and inclusive collections. The working group is encouraged that many selectors are already actively incorporating these practices into their collecting and this recommendation is not intended to be dismissive of those contributions. For those selectors we hope that this recommendation facilitates their

continued work in this area and encourages their participation in developing the community of practice through annual goals.

- Undertake a pilot purchasing program (see FY23 Actions/Goals). This will enable a better understanding of how to implement this collecting work including the potential impact on selection processes and downstream workflows, including acquisitions and discovery workflows. A working assumption is that acquiring these collections and utilizing smaller vendors will require more manual work from selectors and Collections, Acquisitions, and Discovery Services (CAD) staff. Understanding these impacts will enable the Libraries to move this work forward feasibly and sustainably.
- Dedicated funding for the development and sustainability of inclusive and anti-racist collecting at UNLV Libraries should be established. At the time of writing this report the full cost of implementing, backfilling and sustaining this collecting work at UNLV Libraries is not known and so we cannot recommend a specific budget for this work. The working group recommends the Collections Committee, informed by the pilot purchasing program, develop strategies for sustainable funding and undertake additional investigation if needed, to fully understand costs (direct and associated) involved with this collecting work.
- Strategies to track content purchased in support of our inclusive and anti-racist collecting goals should be developed. This will enable the Libraries to assess how our general collections are changing and identify methods and approaches that are working. This tracking will also provide data to better plan for financial sustainability. The pilot purchasing program will provide a starting point for establishing these strategies and the Collections Committee/CAD should work with the pilot program and lead development of sustainable methods for tracking content purchased.
- Identify publishers and vendors that are owned by and/or support historically excluded communities. UNLV Libraries should commit to utilizing these publishers and vendors. The working group recommends that a feasible percentage of the monograph budget or set dollar amount be dedicated to this effort.
- Collections, Interlibrary Loan and Acquisitions (CIA) should lead the development of a guide and talking points for working with new vendors.
- Enhance outreach to increase awareness and use of the collections. This may include resource guides, events, and/or collaborations with other UNLV stakeholders focused on expanding inclusion and reducing racism within the university community.
- Investigate strategies and develop guidelines to divest from publishers, content providers, and fulfillment services that engage in exclusionary business and labor

practices and/or invest in organizations, businesses, and individuals that actively harm historically excluded communities. The guidelines should be contextualized with the need to provide collections that support the curricular and research needs of UNLV and the governing business practices utilized to acquire them. (State of Nevada, NSHE).

FY23 Actions/Goals

- 1) Implement a pilot program focused on anti-racism to better understand the costs and workflows associated with building these collections. Dean's Leadership Circle funding (\$6000) has been secured for FY23 and this work will start in Fall 2022. Amy Tureen will oversee this initial pilot program and will solicit volunteers and input to facilitate this work. A summary report will be created at the end of the pilot. This pilot will include:
 - Develop a list of texts/resources that are essential to addressing and understanding anti-racism.
 - Audit the Libraries' collections using this list, to see which anti-racist resources are missing from our collections, or if additional copies or additional formats are needed. These items will be purchased.
 - Establish a collection format holding policy for key texts that maximizes accessibility to all stakeholders.
 - Identify vendors for the materials to be purchased, prioritizing BIPOC-owned booksellers if available. Work with CAD/Acquisitions to establish purchasing relationships with new vendors and develop and provide information on how to work with UNLV
 - Work with CAD to identify methods/strategies for tracking these purchases in Alma. These methods should enable tracking of other content purchased in support of inclusive and anti-racist collecting goals, and not just be specific to the pilot collection.
 - Assess how workflows and staff time are utilized in acquiring and making these collections discoverable.
 - This will include selectors and staff working in acquisitions and discovery services
 - Host an event emphasizing the importance of maintaining anti-racist content. If possible, this event should include both outreach and inreach components.
 - In a summary report, make recommendations for further funding, staff support, and workflows as appropriate.

- 2) Develop an outline proposal for a collection selected by the UNLV community that reflects and celebrates the diversity of the UNLV community. The goal is to support inclusivity, belonging and increased cultural competence on campus by building a collection that UNLV community members feel represent their cultures, histories and

lived experiences. The materials selected may be academic or non-academic in nature. The proposal should include potential funding options and recommendations for increasing patron awareness of how to participate as well as approaches to utilizing the collection. The Collections Committee will oversee this work and invite volunteers from across the Libraries to participate.

- 3) Develop a framework for implementing a community of practice. This should include suggestions for needed training, resources and communication strategies. The collections working group (report authors) will oversee this effort, collaborating with selectors, department heads and division directors.
 - Develop an internal resource site/libguide providing examples of strategies and practices of selectors already undertaking this work. These are not meant to be an exhaustive list of strategies or tools but can be a starting point for learning, support and sharing. The shared resource site/libguide should be a community owned resource, updated and utilized frequently by all involved in building these collections.
 - Establish a set calendar of events for the community of practice to come together to learn and exchange ideas.

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