CONFERENCE CRITIQUE:
An Analysis of Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Programming

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INTRODUCTION

You are a person interested in equity, diversity, and inclusion (or EDI), so you are excited to attend conference sessions that have the words equity, diversity, and inclusion in the titles and descriptions. However, these panels are not always what you expect. They mean all learning styles are *equal*. They mean the participants come from a *diversity* of places. They mean libraries should *include* more civility between colleagues. If you are a librarian whose professional interest is firmly rooted in EDI, you wonder how conference presenters can use these words without realizing that they have scholarly significance to those who engage in this work every day. These presentations could be from any library conference at any time in the last fifteen years. It goes beyond the scope of this paper, but we suspect this applies to professional development in many fields: the words equity, diversity, and inclusion have been bleached of their EDI meanings.

In 2018, Fobazi Ettarh, April M. Hathcock, Jennifer A. Ferretti, and Rebecca Martin's radical presentation "Our Librarianship/Archival Practice is Not for White People" pointed out that "equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) are having a big moment in librarianship…they are some of [librarianship's] favorite words right now."[1] They noted that even though conferences may have several EDI presentations, those programs don't always "move beyond surface-level awareness that prioritizes white experiences and feelings."[2] Six months after we attended that inspiring program at the Joint Conference of Librarians of Color (JCLC) 2018, we found ourselves at the Association of College & Research Libraries (ACRL) 2019 Conference, the largest conference for academic librarians in the United States. We agree with Ettarh, et al. that although there were many programs about EDI, "[the presentations] rarely engage[d] meaningfully with the experiences and work of librarians and archivists of color."[3]

We are both librarians of color, and sometimes it feels like we exist in a different professional world from our counterparts. We (and the librarians of color we know) competed for scholarships, shared rooms, flew on discount airlines, and spent personal money to be able to attend both ACRL and JCLC conferences when they occurred in the same fiscal year. Many of our white colleagues had not even heard of JCLC. When we mentioned JCLC or other conferences focusing on people of color to them, their comments and reactions implied that these would be less relevant to our careers and less prestigious for our research. Meanwhile, librarians of color are expected to know that ACRL is the

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most important conference for tenure-track librarians and prioritize presenting, attending, and navigating this predominantly white space.

Though funding constraints require all librarians to make thoughtful professional development decisions, for non-marginalized people those choices can be informed by considerations unrelated to identity like scheduling or location. Many academic library topics can be found at larger conferences and a variety of smaller ones. For example, a librarian interested in instruction can expect to find quality programming at ACRL, but also has the option to attend LOEX, Library Instruction West, the Workshop for Instruction in Library Use, the European Conference on Information Literacy, and many others. There are far fewer conferences centering equity, diversity, and inclusion, and they are usually not held annually, sometimes being discontinued without warning. For example, the small conference Diversity, Equity, Race, Accessibility, and Identity in LIS (DERAIL) happened in 2016, 2017, and 2018, but has not happened since. The Association of Research Libraries (ARL) sponsored the National Diversity in Libraries Conference once in 2016. It was then rebranded to IDEAL three years later without any conferences in between. JCLC has only been held in 2006, 2012, and 2018. Because these conferences that focus solely on EDI occur less frequently, attendance at them is crucial for presenting, learning, and convening amongst that community of scholars. Although these conferences are open to all races and ethnicities, our experience at JCLC was that the majority of attendees were librarians of color. In a field that is 88% white, it is a rare opportunity to *not be a minority* in a professional space.[4] This conference conundrum raised a question that we have often asked ourselves since entering higher education: are we academic librarians or are we librarians of color?

In this article, we will share our preliminary findings of a content analysis of three years of JCLC programs and three years of ACRL programs. At JCLC, almost all presentations are related to EDI in some way, so we looked for programming related to academic libraries. At ACRL, almost all offerings are related to academic libraries in some way, so we looked for content related to EDI. We will demonstrate how the words of EDI have suffered a "generalization of meaning" and compare how JCLC programs centered EDI while ACRL programs treated them as add-on topics in many instances.[5] We will explore how the JCLC conferences cultivated the entire career path of librarians of color while ACRL focused mostly on recruitment of those same librarians. Finally, we will offer recommendations for non-marginalized librarians, conference planning committees, and academic libraries.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Content analysis is a method of "detailed and systematic examination of the contents of a particular body of material for the purpose of identifying patterns, themes, or biases."[6] A recent review of the technique in library and information science journals found that content analysis was used 338 times across 119 journals from 1990 to 2015, and it appeared in library journal articles as early as 1983.[7] Researchers have used content analysis on various library conferences programs and proceedings.[8] In 1991, Snelson and Talar conducted the first content analysis of ACRL conference papers to determine how many were research based and several analyses have followed examining ACRL conference papers for representation of topics such as scholarly communication, technical services, or for presenter information.[9] ACRL and JCLC conference programs have never been the subjects of a content analysis (likely because they were not previously available in electronic formats) and equity, diversity, and inclusion has never been the focus of any LIS content analysis.

Our inspiration for this project did not actually come from this history of content analysis at all, but rather from Cooke and Jacobs' curriculum audit of 108 syllabi for content related to diversity and cultural competence.[10] They posited that audits can reveal gaps which "represent deficits…with regard to diversity, social justice, and related topics, or gaps in teaching personnel."[11] We originally intended to do a diversity audit of ACRL conference programs, but determined that content analysis was a more appropriate methodology for the texts.

METHODS

Our qualitative and quantitative content analysis utilized six conference programs: JCLC 2006, 2012, 2018 and ACRL 2007, 2013, and 2019. Because there have only been three JCLCs thus far, we chose the ACRL confer-

ences from the same fiscal year for comparison. We did not include keynotes, author events, or socials. We did include any presentation format that was consistent across all three conference programs and contained both a title and description. For example, we did not analyze ACRL 2019 lightning talks because they were a brand new format to ACRL conferences. Although ACRL 2019 roundtables did have descriptions, the ACRL 2007 and 2013 roundtables displayed titles only, so we did not code any roundtables. We acquired electronic PDFs of some programs and created others using an Octoparse web crawler on the conference websites. We randomly selected three pages from each conference to use for manual pre-coding to test whether we could explore our research questions using our intended methods. In this process we read each program title and description aloud, identified whether it met our research parameters, and determined preliminary codes.

We developed our coding frame as "a list of codes…accompanied by code definitions."[12] We then used AT-LAS.ti 8 to individually code each conference program's text. Once coding was completed, these seemingly disparate data points could be used to deduce themes or reveal phenomena. After combining our individual coding files for comparison, we examined the master file for any discrepancies in how we individually applied the coding frame to the documents. We discussed each quote that we coded differently and came to consensus for which code(s) to apply. Having two researchers with different identities and backgrounds consistently double coding the same text using a pre-established process validated our insights and strengthened our findings. Finally, we had almost 200 pages of coded text to analyze.

Memo creation proved vital, as it forced us to "document and reflect on [our] coding process and code choices" and allowed us to explain "how the process of inquiry [was] taking shape…and emergent patterns…in [our] data."[13] Memos also documented our evolving observations. For example, through our memos we realized we needed to expand the code *library school* to *library school & library school recruitment*. More importantly, our *attention* code was originally designed to point out interesting observations to each other. We ended up using it to identify a variety of problematic language that we did not have a code for since it was outside the official scope of our research questions. Ultimately, this was our first hint that librarians were using the words equity, diversity, and inclusion in a generalized manner. Our individual memos highlighted our remarkably different approaches to analyzing the data, and these differences added richness and trustworthiness to the content analysis process.

FINDINGS

We originally set out to do a content analysis of three ACRL conference programs for EDI-related content and three JCLC conference programs for academia-related content. Only 1% of content analyses in LIS research used three or more data sources, so we are uniquely positioned to comment on phenomena we observed in these six programs.[14] We ask readers to try to not focus on the identities of the people who wrote these descriptions. We use these examples to show the pervasiveness of the problems we have identified, not to call out any one individual. In fact, one of the authors of this paper presented one of the conference sessions described below. We have chosen not to use titles or cite programs that are the subject of our critique.

Semantic Bleaching

One unexpected finding was that in ACRL conference programs (and likely in librarianship as a whole), the word diverse is undergoing a process linguists call semantic bleaching. Semantic bleaching is when a word "loses its intention: from describing a narrow set of ideas, it comes to describe an ever broader range of them, and eventually may lose its meaning altogether."[15] Also called generalization or grammaticalization, this happens in all languages over time.[16] One example of this is the word *guys*. Over time and repetition, *guys* stopped being specific to men and generalized to include women and non-binary people.[17] Many English speakers have accepted the semantic bleaching of *guys* and consider it a harmless gender neutral collective noun. However, sociologist Sherryl Kleinman argued that *guys* is "the most insidious" "male-based generic" because it "reinforce[s] the message that men are the standard and that women should be subsumed by the male category."[18] *Guys* (and Kleinman's analysis of it) also erases non-binary, genderqueer, and two-spirit people out of existence entirely.

In ACRL conference programs, the word *diverse* has become a synonym for *different*, and its relation to equity, diversity, and inclusion is being erased. Out of the 116 programs that we coded for ACRL 2007, the words *diverse* and *diversity* were only used in EDI-focused programs describing traditionally underrepresented, underserved, or marginalized people. One example was a program about the "research needs of GLBT/Sexual Diversity Studies students." Another was about how to "recruit and retain diverse professionals…[from] statistically and historically underrepresented groups."

In ACRL 2013, *diversity* retained its EDI meaning, but it was also used five times as a synonym for different. A program with "diverse institutions" went on to describe how those institutions were different in terms of their categorization as "urban and suburban, residential and commuter, public and private." Other programs didn't specify differences and simply mentioned "diverse groups," "extremely diverse roles," "diverse digital collections," and "diverse constituents" with no other reference to EDI.

In ACRL 2019, *diversity* continued to have an EDI meaning, but it was also used in seventeen programs without any indication that any part of the program was related to EDI. There were "diverse student populations," "diverse lived experiences," "diverse roles," "diverse needs," "diversity of needs," and "diverse learning styles." There were also "diverse…directors," "a diverse group," "diverse people," "diverse voices," "diverse campuses," and "diverse communities." There were "geographically diverse…libraries" and "diverse ways [that librarians] use the Framework." Finally, a service like academic ebook delivery was "diverse." Of course, *diverse* originally did mean *different*, but in ACRL 2007 it was never used as a synonym and was only used in programs related to underrepresented people. In 2007, "research libraries respond[ed] to many different needs and constituencies" and undergraduate students attended "four different institutions of various sizes and types." We do not know why the word *diverse* was never used in place of *different* in 2007, but was used five times in 2013 and seventeen times in 2019. Clearly academic librarians are changing how they write their program descriptions. Semantic bleaching is a process where a word with a specific definition is so overused that it starts to mean nothing at all, and in ACRL conference programs the word *diversity* has started to be bleached of its connection to equity, diversity, and inclusion. This has made it more difficult for attendees to find actual EDI scholarship when reading conference program descriptions. It has created the idea that any presentation about any kind of difference can be about equity, diversity, and inclusion.

Rather than sprinkling the words *diverse* and *diversity* all over proposals, librarians should make an effort to question whether their program is actually about EDI. If it is not, they should use more specific language that identifies what differences they are referring to. Although we focused our analysis of JCLC on programs related to higher education, we did a brief investigation into the use of *diverse* and *diversity* and did not discover semantic bleaching. The words were always used within an EDI context, and the conference program descriptions specified which aspect of diversity was being addressed.

Centering vs. Mentioning

One of the major differences between the two conferences was that JCLC program titles and descriptions typically centered EDI while ACRL programs often treated EDI as an add-on to the true content of the presentation. We coded and counted these as being about EDI, but these programs did not show the same depth found in similar JCLC programs. For example, one ACRL program about LIS curriculum creation squeezed diversity between ethics and information literacy initiatives and theoretically offered attendees advice on incorporating all three into the graduate program. A JCLC program about EDI and LIS curricula described a specific course focused on "critical race theories, intersectionality, and other critical theories" and shared "approaches…assessment and suggestions for improvement" of the course.

One potential benefit of JCLC presenters consistently centering EDI in their work was that they seemed more adept at creating institutional opportunities for entire communities rather than for individuals. Both ACRL and JCLC had programs about women (and other underrepresented people) in makerspaces. However, the ACRL panel focused on individual women and the single project they each made (in addition to one woman who founded a community makerspace outside of her university). The JCLC panel noted that the mission of their university makerspace was to "create a safe and inclusive space for the entire community" and described

how they "intentionally created partnerships and designed events to cultivate a diverse user group, and to counteract…dominant structures." Rather than championing a few individual creators who successfully navigated spaces typically inhabited by white men, the JCLC panel shared two events and one program that purposefully brought women and people of color into their makerspace.

We also noticed a difference between the description lengths between JCLC and ACRL programs. Although the submission systems for these programs are no longer active, we confirmed that for ACRL 2019, presenters were allowed to write up to 500 words for their proposal description and up to 100 words for their program description. Only the shorter text was used in the conference programs. It was possible that the longer descriptions centered EDI, but presenters chose to eliminate that focus for whatever reason. In the future, ACRL might consider using the shorter one in the printed program but offering the full description online.

JCLC 2006 and 2012 presenters seemed to have a 150-word limit, while 2018 presenters appeared to have a 300-word limit. However, a common theme across all three years was specificity of what aspect of equity, diversity, and inclusion was being centered. For example, one program about the "academic, research, and teaching needs of…diverse faculty, staff, and students" went on to specify how only offering popular instructional sessions in English "create[d] learning barriers for non-native English speakers." The program described how this realization led to offering EndNote instruction in Chinese and shared how attendees could "plan and implement similar instruction programs." Another program about "campus connections to white supremacy" began with a broad overview of how "statues, building namesakes, or place names…associated with the confederacy" are "symbolic of the long historical threads of racism." It then offered a case study of how a university "develop[ed] evaluation criteria, work[ed] with community stakeholders, respond[ed] to a student protest, provid[ed] a team of scholars historical research assistance" and "the role of archivists and research librarians" in these processes. A program about cultural humility identified its goals for participants to "gain a deeper understanding of the cultural humility framework, name and reflect on their own privilege and identities, and get practice in interrupting scenarios of bias and problematic behavior." At JCLC, it was not enough to simply know what equity, diversity, and inclusion are or to observe related concepts in research. JCLC presenters centered EDI in their librarianship and were able to define and observe specific EDI needs in academic libraries, address those needs, and help participants create an action-oriented plan for their own institutions.

Cultivating the Careers of Librarians of Color

There were also marked differences in the amount of programming for different parts of a librarian of color's career. ACRL programs tended to focus on recruitment of librarians of color. JCLC offered sessions for every career stage from recruiting students into MLIS programs to the drawbacks and benefits of diversity residencies to exploring leadership opportunities in academic libraries.

Espinal, Sutherland, and Roh noted the importance of recruitment, retention, and promotion for expanding diversity and inclusion in librarianship, but also pointed out that "librarians of color tend to recognize each other's leadership skills and celebrate [them], while their white counterparts tend to do the opposite."[19] To address recruitment, JCLC had programs like "The Ripple Effect: Fostering an Interest in Librarianship Among Talented Undergrads" and "Growing Your Own: Raising MLIS Diversity Numbers by Educating Support Staff."[20] For MLIS students and librarians interested in pursuing a PhD, there was "Conceptualizing Diversity and Inclusion in Information Sciences as Doctoral Students of Color."[21] To help librarians of color succeed in academic libraries, JCLC had programs about general mentorship like "Mentoring For Us, By Us in the Field of LIS" and ones that addressed specific aspects of academia like "Gumbo Stew: Recipes for Navigating Academic Publishing."[22] Library leaders of color shared their experiences in panels like "An Intimate Conversation with LIS Deans and Directors of Color."[23]

Out of 364 program descriptions that were coded across three years of JCLC, thirteen programs (3.6%) were about leadership development of librarians of color. One popular format was a panel of librarians of color who participated in programs like the ALA Spectrum Scholarship, the ACRL/Harvard Leadership Institute for Academic Librarians, the Association of Research Libraries' Leadership and Career Development Program, the Minnesota Institute, and the University of Maryland Diversity Immersion Institute. There was also a JCLC

poster for librarians whose leadership aspirations go beyond the academic library and into university administration. The "presenter was awarded two highly competitive fellowships by his institution" which "enabled him to shadow the second-most senior administrator of the University, full-time for the entire calendar year" and "afforded him to participate in a series of high-level academic leadership development seminars." Almost all of the presenters were librarians of color, and as JCLC attendees we truly felt that all the speakers wanted us to be successful in our careers.

Out of 932 program descriptions that were coded across three years of ACRL, 4 programs (0.4%) were about leadership development of librarians of color. These were

- "Charting a Course: HBCU Library Alliance Leadership in Action,"
- "What's Your Motivation? Why Underrepresented Librarians Choose to Stay and Grow,"
- "Taking Charge of Your Narrative," and
- "Recasting Library Leadership Training to Support Diversity."[24]

Meanwhile, nine programs (1%) were about recruiting librarians of color. Obviously, we cannot be developed and promoted if we are not first recruited, but perhaps there would not need to be such an emphasis on finding us and hiring us if there was more support throughout our careers.

Additionally, presenting the lack of diversity in the profession as a problem of recruitment ignores the ways that librarians of color are forced out because of racist and toxic work environments.[25] Jennifer A. Ferretti described how even at a conference like JCLC which "centers work done by and with communities of color," a sign telling workshop attendees "DO NOT ENTER THIS ROOM IF YOU DON'T BELIEVE THE NARRATIVES OF PEOPLE OF COLOR" was considered "hostile" and "unwelcoming" by a white woman.[26]

It is perhaps unsurprising that many of the presentations by academic librarians of color at ACRL were about sharing the experiences of our existence in higher education or how to survive academia rather than our career advancement. Presentations about the professional lives of academic librarians of color included

- "Endurance is Not Transformation: Narratives of Women of Color on the Promotion-and-Tenure-Track,"
- "Academic Library Casting Calls: Representation, Recruitment, and Retention of Librarians of Color,"
- "Improving Diversity Residencies Through Learned Experiences," and
- "Reclaiming Our Time: A Conversation with Tenure-Track Academic Librarians of Color."[27]

Programs about the survival of academic librarians of color included

- "Redefining the Wellness Wheel for Librarians of Color,"
- "Making the Connection: Invisible Labor and Radical Self-Care for Women of Color Librarians," and
- "Managing the Stress of Microaggressions with Mindfulness."[28]

It is worth noting that all of these programs were from ACRL 2019; there were no similar offerings at ACRL 2007 or ACRL 2013.

Problematic Phrases

There is enormous pressure to write a program title and description that stands out at ACRL. Only 20-30% of proposals are accepted, and those that are must compete for attendees during concurrent sessions.[29] It is tempting to be witty, but so-called humor often comes at other people's expense. A program about library instruction contained a fatphobic reference to "the freshman fifteen." A law librarian who presumably was familiar with Plessy v. Ferguson used the phrase "separate but equal" to discuss the faculty status of librarians. One session with "tribal differences" in the title actually referred to "disciplinary differences in scholarly communication practices" rather than Indigenous tribes. A program that discussed "the value of intersectional work" was describing "the intersection of information literacy and scholarly communication." Since 1989, intersectionality has primarily referred to "the way in which various forms of inequality often operate together and exacerbate each other," specifically the intersecting and inextricable oppressions of racism and sexism that Black women experience.[30] Either the presenters were unaware of Crenshaw's definition, or they assumed that the average ACRL attendee would not be.

Other programs seemed to completely ignore the existence of marginalized people in presentations and research areas where their experiences should have been considered. One program about being a devil's advocate

"encourage[d] free and open discussion of all viewpoints" because "contrary, unpopular views can stimulate lively discussion." Another program researched "perceptions of librarian approachability." The authors acknowledged that they were "focusing on those [practices] that librarians can readily change on a day-to-day basis" but didn't reference how ableism, homophobia, racism, sexism, transphobia, and other forms of discrimination might affect a person's perceived approachability. Again, we only analyzed the titles and descriptions—not the presentations themselves. It was possible that the presenters discussed how power and privilege influences who gets to be a devil's advocate, whose lives are affected by unpopular views, and whether approachability is a standard rooted in white supremacy, but it was also possible that they did not. These programs were outside the scope of our research questions and coding frame, but we point them out as reminders to be thoughtful with language and to consider the perspective of the marginalized people who could be harmed by your words, your erasure, or your research. We did not notice similar problematic phrases in the JCLC programs that we analyzed.

LIMITATIONS

Although we created and applied the codes *LGBTQIA* and *disability* in ACRL programs, we have not yet explored those findings. Additionally, we were not academic librarians during the years that four of the conferences took place and thus have no personal experiences about what those conferences were like beyond the descriptions found in the programs. Even for the two conferences we were a part of (JCLC 2018 and ACRL 2019), we did not and could not have attended all the conference sessions we coded and analyzed. Ultimately, we do not know the content or conclusions that were shared with attendees. Finally, these are only our preliminary findings. The 2020 Coronavirus pandemic shortened the research and publication timelines for this article causing us to scale back our aspirations. We plan to continue analyzing the dataset and hope to publish more in the future.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Non-marginalized librarians should think critically about their contributions to research about equity, diversity, and inclusion. They should be careful not to use *diverse* as a synonym for *different* and to be honest with their potential audiences about what aspects of EDI are actually included in their research and presentations. This is not to say that non-marginalized librarians cannot research or present on equity, diversity, and inclusion. The aforementioned ACRL presentation "Managing the Stress of Microaggressions with Mindfulness" was a collaboration with a white librarian whose research about microaggressions began in 2009 and regularly included librarians of color as collaborators.[31] Non-marginalized librarians need to notice and interrogate why a group of presenters discussing equity, diversity, and inclusion doesn't include underrepresented librarians. We would expect a panel of men discussing women in academic libraries to receive pushback from conference planners and attendees. Librarians interested in researching an underrepresented group should be working with members of that community at every stage of their research.

Conference planners and selection committees should offer space for deep, impactful EDI programming which is necessary in a profession that continually calls for diverse recruitment but struggles with attrition. They should also verify that their understanding of common EDI words and concepts (like *accessibility*, *critical librarianship*, *diversity*, and *intersectionality*) is consistent with the research in these areas. If a proposal uses these words incorrectly, the proposal should be rejected or edited. Conference attendees would expect that a program with the word *assessment* is actually about assessment and a program with the word *collections* is actually about collections. The same standard should be applied to presentations that reference EDI.

Finally, academic institutions should accept research agendas and conference attendance that center equity, diversity, and inclusion, as having the same weight, value, and importance as any other areas of librarianship. If institutional norms favor presenting at and attending conferences that don't focus on EDI (like ACRL), then additional funding should be provided to support presenting at and attending conferences that do. If libraries want to recruit, retain, and support librarians of color, they should also provide financial opportunities for them to attend conferences where they will not be in the minority. Academic librarians of color do report experiencing microaggressions in the workplace, and unfortunately white librarians tend to not even notice that it's happen-

ing.[32] Attending a conference like JCLC, the People of Color in Library and Information Science Summit, or any national or regional event hosted by an ALA ethnic caucus is an opportunity for librarians of color to experience what white librarians experience every day: what it's like to be a part of the majority.

CONCLUSION

TABLE 1			
	JCLC Overall	**JCLC 2006**	**JCLC 2012**	**JCLC 2018**
Total Programs	362	123	120	119
Academia-Related Programs	161 (45%)	45 (37%)	62 (52%)	56 (47%)
	ACRL Overall	**ACRL 2007**	**ACRL 2013**	**ACRL 2019**
Total Programs	932	116	364	452
EDI-Related Programs	113 (12%)	6 (5%)	18 (5%)	89 (20%)

ACRL programs were counted as having EDI content if they had *any* reference to accessibility, cultural competency, disability, diversity, equity, inclusion, LGBTQIA people, race and/or ethnicity, social justice, underrepresented students, or underrepresented librarians. 5% of ACRL 2007 programs, 5% of ACRL 2013 programs, and 20% of ACRL 2019 programs contained content related to equity, diversity, and inclusion. Librarians interested in learning about or presenting about EDI at conferences should consider the amount of programming available, the specificity of those programs, and the backgrounds of the presenters and audience members which may influence the content of the presentations.

Overall, JCLC offered much more programming about academic libraries than ACRL offered about equity, diversity, and inclusion. 37% of JCLC 2006 programs, 52% of JCLC 2012 programs, and 47% of JCLC 2018 programs were coded for content related to university programs and academic libraries. We originally set out to critique both conferences because, based on what we heard from white colleagues, we assumed that early JCLC conferences did not offer many programs related to academic librarianship. However, based on our experience as attendees in 2018 and the results of this content analysis, JCLC has much to offer an academic librarian.

Clearly, topics related to equity, diversity, and inclusion, are trending at ACRL conferences. A 1988 analysis of subject trends in LIS research sorted thirty-two subjects into five categories: "boom topics, declining topics, roller coaster issues, stable subjects, and bell-shaped curve issues."[33] One 1988 boom topic was technology, which has turned into a stable subject, but some specific technologies became bell curves that trended and disappeared. No harm is intended or created when a technology enters and leaves the popular library discourse. The floppy disk and *Second Life* did not experience pain when they became irrelevant and were no longer discussed at library conferences.

We want to see librarians and academic institutions center equity, diversity, and inclusion in their work. However, we are concerned that it will come and go from ACRL the same way other topics have. If the quality of EDI programing doesn't increase, or if the quantity decreases, the message that higher education and academic librarianship has long sent to people of color will continue to be reinforced: we do not belong, and our experiences, struggles, and oppressions do not matter. And the non-marginalized librarians who professionally profited during the boom years of EDI research can and will return to the safety their privilege provides.

Lastly, to answer the question: are we academic librarians or are we librarians of color? We are solidly both. We should be able to fully inhabit our identities, and that could mean pursuing professional development and research agendas that center our lived experiences. It is true that not all librarians of color are EDI scholars, and not all EDI scholars are librarians of color. However, all librarians are capable of seeking out information, verifying understanding, and thoughtfully engaging in scholarly conversations. These skills are especially important for people who want to research equity, diversity, and inclusion, and for those who get to select what EDI research is presented at the most prestigious conference for academic librarians.

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NOTES

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