

Scholarly Communication as A Tool for Furthering Social Justice

Lorraine J. Haricombe

University of Texas

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Abstract

Making information available and sharing it are core values of the Library and Information Science (LIS) profession. Disseminating knowledge for more equitable and inclusive academic ecosystems is an excellent springboard from which to connect social justice principles with scholarly communication. The Budapest Open Access Initiative tied together social justice and technology for knowledge sharing as a public good. Open access publishing has promised greater equity by making research freely accessible; however, equitable access is not guaranteed by simply removing pricing and permission barriers. Current practices in scholarly communication reflect systemic inequalities that reinforce existing power structures and sustain the knowledge gap between the haves and the have-nots. Greater awareness of these inequalities can help break down traditional gatekeeping practices. Embedding social justice training in LIS education offers students a different lens to move the discussion beyond pricing and affordability of scholarly communication. This essay is based on secondary sources and personal communication to highlight scholarly communication training as a natural avenue to advance social justice principles. Academic librarianship practice is evolving to address these issues. Collaborating with academic libraries offers LIS students a practical lens to be active participants in centering social justice in scholarly communication to address these inequalities.

Keywords: social justice, scholarly communication, open access, LIS education, academic libraries.

Introduction

The LIS profession has a longstanding commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion. However, translating that professional commitment into LIS education has been hampered by difficulties in addressing sensitive or uncomfortable topics; structural impediments due to policies (passive); or resistance to changes (active), among others (Mehra, 2021). Meanwhile, global awareness of issues including social justice, anti-racism, diversity,

and equity is on the rise. Because we address these sensitive topics frequently in our professional lives, we should ensure that LIS curricula are structured using social justice principles to equip rising professionals for success. This requires adapting LIS practices to focus on inclusion, access, respectful relationships, and community building to train culturally competent and socially responsible LIS professionals. Scholarly communication in its current form offers an excellent opportunity to introduce social justice principles in LIS education.

Academic librarianship practice is evolving to address these issues already. Scholarly communication is central to the functioning of academic libraries and open access (OA) provided a strategy that tied together social justice and technology for knowledge sharing as a public good (BOAI, 2002). Open access principles include addressing local, national and global challenges that reflect socio-economic disparities, colonialism, transnational bias, race, inclusion and access. Despite its promise of greater equity, OA publishing does not guarantee equitable access by simply removing pricing and permission barriers. Scholars, especially in the Global South, are significantly hampered by tangible and intangible barriers to accessing information or to contributing to scholarly publishing or to sharing their research. Instead of democratizing access to information, OA seems to reinforce and create new inequalities (Nkoudou, 2020). Prohibitive author processing fees set by publishers, the exclusion of research from historically underrepresented communities and the Global South, language barriers and the lack of reward systems for open scholarship are just a few examples of the existing unfairness in the scholarly publishing ecosystem. Scholars face paywalls when their academic libraries can no longer subscribe to the high-priced academic journals that support their research and teaching, leaving them out in the cold or using platforms such as Sci-Hub, a shadow library website that provides free access to millions of research papers, regardless of copyright. Simply put, OA has been subverted from its original intent and repurposed to benefit a handful of powerful publishers that work to keep the Global North and Euro-centric perspectives up front.

These inequities in scholarly communication have deep implications for social justice concerns. For this reason, the LIS classroom is an ideal place to introduce students and emerging professionals to the core values associated with social responsibility. However, LIS education on the practices of scholarly communication and translating it as social justice is lacking. Incoming LIS students are hungry for formal education in both. Grassroots efforts are underway as I will show, but we need to bring both scholarly communication and social justice to LIS education because these are real-world problems librarians are already facing. Embedding social justice in LIS education will prepare and equip students with greater awareness of the inequalities in scholarly communication to help break down traditional gatekeeping practices, challenge the status quo and advocate for the rights of marginalized

groups to contribute to and benefit from scientific and academic advancements.

Research problem

The term social justice includes a wide variety of social goals and encompasses a range of concepts. At its core, it is about equal rights, equal opportunities, and equal treatment to ensure fairness and equity for all members of society to live with dignity and respect. In the context of scholarly communication, social justice is about recognizing and protecting access to information as a fundamental human right, a core value of libraries. Gray (2018) describes her LIS training where the value of collections, literacy instruction, privacy, and the digital universe was prioritized. Despite the undercurrents of social justice issues in the profession, explicit theoretical foundations of social justice, its meaning and how it contributes to library practice, were missing in her courses. For this reason, she values social justice teaching-centered scholarship to equip herself with tips and tools to embed social justice training in her own teaching.

Where social justice courses are present, students are asking for more, especially within a turbulent and politically charged cultural fabric. For example, a group of student advocates of social justice expressed a strong preference for praxis that highlights a more progressive form of librarianship training that addresses social justice issues. They want to embrace the political components of the profession and want to be well equipped with the theory and practice of social justice in their training before they enter the workforce (Helkenberg et al., 2018). Students who took social justice training describe the impact as transformational. Batiste (2024) acknowledges the value of social justice training in his LIS program which equipped him with critical thinking skills that helped him evaluate how systemic barriers affect access to information. His training in social justice also prepared him to challenge everyday library systems that hinder diversity, equity and inclusion in the scholarly ecosystem. This critical perspective led him to take practical steps to formulate inclusive strategies to meet the diverse needs of his library users.

Scholarly communication is a relatively new and fast developing field in LIS praxis and is central to the work of libraries. As proponents of open scholarship, libraries have taken the lead on innovative approaches to address costly inequalities in scholarly communication. In addressing these costly inequities, academic libraries have developed institutional repositories and invested in tools to capture the research output of a given institution (e.g. green OA), supported low cost and OA journals (e.g. diamond OA) that provide direct alternatives to high priced commercial titles. Libraries are also leading open educational initiatives to support the growing demand for open educational resources (OER). At the heart of the OER movement is the intention to provide affordable access to education and to address structural inequities found throughout academia and scholarly publishing.

Despite libraries' significant investments and initiatives in scholarly communication there is a stark disconnect between LIS praxis and LIS education around this topic. As such LIS graduates feel underprepared for the rapidly evolving responsibilities in the scholarly communication job market. Bonn et al. (2020) found that few practicing scholarly communication professionals feel well-prepared by their graduate training and are themselves deploying continuing professional development strategies to fill the gap.

Objective

Improving education around scholarly communication and OA in LIS education and LIS praxis provides a natural avenue to advance social justice principles.

Literature review

A growing body of literature addresses the intersection of the principles of social justice and scholarly communication.

Raju et al. (2023) and Raju and Badrudeen (2021) use a social justice framework to anchor and advance OA principles for knowledge sharing. Roh et al. (2020) focus on a radical vision of scholarly communication as a series of material practices that could be constructed otherwise -- rooted in addressing equity and justice rather than colonization and dominance. Nakamura et al. (2023) note the lack of change in neocolonial practices in academia after two decades of OA while Baildon (2016) offers recommendations to address the euro-centric bias in scholarly communication and in higher education in general. Ameen (2020) decries academic librarianship's bias towards a Eurocentric, class-based system that dismisses scholarship that ventures beyond dominant intellectual traditions. Cooke et al. (2016) extend a call to action to LIS educators to use social justice principles to move students from mere awareness and acknowledgement of inequalities to actively work towards betterment, equality and respect for those we want to include.

Relevant concepts

Social justice in LIS

Definitions of social justice vary in wording, but several LIS scholars and practitioners provide precise concepts of social justice. These concepts provide an understanding of how LIS professionals and scholars are using the idea of social justice in their work. For example, Morales et al. (2014) focus on "the ability of all people to fully benefit from social and economic progress to participate equally in democratic societies" (p.440). Mehra et al. (2010) explored the intersection of libraries, information science, and social justice and how libraries can be agents of social change to ensure that everyone, regardless of background or circumstance, has equal access to information.

They define a socially just society as one where “individuals and groups are treated fairly and receive an equitable share of all the benefits in society” (p. 4820).

Scholarly communication

Scholarly communication is a relatively new discipline in LIS and is defined as “the system through which research and other scholarly writings are created, evaluated for quality, disseminated to the scholarly community, and preserved for the future” (ACRL, 2003). It is central to the functioning of academic libraries and requires an understanding of the publishing landscape, a key element of scholarly communication. Scholarly publishing is a complex industry involving many stakeholders with a variety of practices that have resulted in persistent disparities that have been well documented.

Open access

Open access provides a much-needed alternative to the dysfunctions of the economics of the current publishing system. Conceived as a statement of principle and commitment to provide equal access to scholarly information as a public good for all, OA is not an end unto itself but a means to other ends, above all, to the equity, quality, usability, and sustainability of research (BOAI20).

Open educational resources

Open educational resources (OERs) exist within the larger context of scholarly communications to support teaching where teachers and faculty impart knowledge to learners and students. The idea behind OERs is simple but powerful – teaching, learning and research resources that reside in the public domain or have been made freely and legally available under an intellectual property license that permit their free use and repurposing by others. At the heart of the OER movement is the intention to provide affordable access to education and to address structural inequities found throughout academia and scholarly publishing. Cooke and Trotter (2018) describe this imperative as a desire to provide a culturally sensitive education in a manner consistent with social justice that focuses on the need for parity of participation in education or inclusion.

Discussion

Social justice in LIS and training

This overview of social justice in LIS programs focuses on documented sources in North America where the American Library Association (ALA) accredits LIS programs. Despite the undercurrents of social justice issues in LIS, content about diversity, equity and inclusion is practically invisible in LIS training. Jones (2020) surveyed ten LIS programs in north America and found that only four of the ten mentioned the terms diversity, community,

citizenship, equity, or access and offered ways that future graduates might build community and benefit society. The other six schools focused solely on the technological aspects of librarianship, career prospects of the program, or classroom experience. He also found a lack of OA course descriptions and a shortage of integration in required courses that offered very limited opportunities for prospective students to seek social justice training. When offered, social justice issues were only moderately discussed across the LIS curriculum and most often offered as an elective, not a required course. That position of marginality has changed recently when the American Library Association (ALA) officially acknowledged the growing and changing complexity of our global society. In 2023 ALA expanded its scope of accreditation standards to include equity, diversity, inclusion and social justice with regards to information and its use (ALA, 2023). It is too soon to assess the impact of that change or how social justice will be included in LIS programs. However, it is a step in the right direction to address students' concerns and needs for social justice training to prepare them for the realities of LIS praxis. Students want topics such as indigenization, decolonization, the digital divide, bias, commodification of information and privilege, all of which intersect with social justice principles in scholarly communication. These topics offer opportunities for classroom discussion to understand, challenge or disrupt Global North bias, the current colonial systems of knowledge distribution, the cost of access to information, and the lack of access to digital systems and participation (Helkenberg et al., 2018).

The lack of social justice courses is further exacerbated by the lack of social justice teaching-centered scholarship that is imperative to attract and prepare future LIS professionals with strong social justice agendas. Fortunately, a growing body of literature is emerging to embed a social justice framework in LIS training, e.g. Mehra (2022), Cooke and Sweeney (2018) and Cooke et al. (2016). Their work is based on practical examples of approaches at a few LIS programs. For example, Mehra (2021) uses social justice design to implement innovative pedagogies and reflective practices to transform LIS education. His courses focus on training students to learn new modes of community-engaged scholarship by venturing outside their academic comfort zones. Students are encouraged to identify the application of information-communication work to serve community partners. He nudges students to immerse themselves in embedded contexts to identify possible concrete solutions with or for external stakeholders. The goal is to support students in developing a critical analysis of existing realities and challenges and to propose initiatives that their collaborating agencies can adopt. Cooke et al. (2016) focus on using social justice as a topic and tool that requires a blended approach that extends across LIS curricula, professional practice and research to train culturally competent and socially responsible library professionals. Components of this blended approach include developing students' ability to critically reflect on the role of information technologies and institutions in society and their own positionality and privilege that shape their practice. Their work offers a practical guide to introducing social justice

as a topic that can help unpack the issues of inequity in scholarly communication. These examples offer some creative ways to embed social justice training in LIS programs that can be extended for other purposes e.g. archival studies. Buck and Valentino (2018) took a practical approach by developing a social justice course on OER, highlighting the potential for these courses to create future advocates for OA.

All the aforementioned LIS faculty acknowledge the unique problems and challenges of embedding social justice across the program vs. a structured traditional approach to the LIS curriculum. Notwithstanding these challenges, Rioux (2010) warns that student engagement is key to social justice outcomes and the effectiveness of the LIS profession to prepare students for a politically charged ecosystem.

Scholarly communication

Libraries play a crucial role in the scholarly communication lifecycle and have quickly developed a set of core competencies to support access to resources, research and to facilitate the dissemination of knowledge to the wider community. As early proponents of OA, libraries have taken the lead in innovative approaches to address costly inequalities in scholarly communication. To enable this work, libraries created systems and platforms that enable their users to have free access to the information they need for learning, growth, and empowerment, regardless of technology, format, or delivery methods (ALA, 2024). In addressing these inequities, academic libraries have developed multiple strategies at the local, national and international level. At the local level, libraries have invested in institutional repositories to capture the research output of a given institution, known as green OA and many are hosting low-cost OA journals, e.g. diamond OA, that provide direct alternatives to high priced commercial titles. The University of Cape Town Libraries went one step further and developed a community-based publishing alternative for Africa. Grounded in social justice principles, the publishing platform was launched to help Africans take charge of their own knowledge, where knowledge is free to access for the reader and authors don't have to pay to publish (Raju, 2021).

Academic libraries have also invested in dedicated professional positions to support the growing demand for scholarly communication. However, despite this fast-growing subfield in LIS many practicing scholarly communication librarians say they lack the training necessary and feel ill-prepared to do the work (Bonn et al., 2020). This lack of scholarly communication training does not align with libraries' significant investments over two decades to develop the infrastructure and expertise they need to support scholarly communication.

Kingsley (2017) notes the difficulty of engaging LIS schools in the UK on the issue of scholarly communication, and Raju (2019) observed that LIS schools' curricula in South Africa did not seem to keep pace with new and emerging trends in scholarly communication. Accredited LIS programs in North America tend to present themselves as information schools with specialized sub-disciplines, but scholarly communication is sorely lacking. Hollister's research in 2017 highlights the growing importance of scholarly communication in academic libraries. His study surveyed LIS students who took scholarly communication courses and found that a majority considered scholarly communication relevant to their career goals. This suggests that integrating scholarly communication into LIS curricula could better prepare students for emerging roles in academic libraries. However, his survey found that only 15% (9 of 59) of ALA-accredited programs appeared to include scholarly communication courses. A few years later Tmava (2022) also emphasized the need for LIS programs given the increasing demand for librarians with scholarly communication skills and found that only 6 out of 48 ALA accredited programs offer a course in scholarly communication.

These perceptions may be slightly skewed since topics in scholarly communication may be hidden behind other course titles, but the trend is clear. Then and now, LIS programs may not be preparing new LIS professionals with the background and critical lens to effect change in scholarly communication. An Institute of Museums and Library Services (IMLS) funded study found a key reason for the gap between LIS training and LIS praxis: a lack of communication between LIS practitioners and LIS faculty (Sands et al., 2018). In addition, LIS programs do not have full-time LIS faculty to teach the courses which exacerbates the problem at a time when there is high interest in this work. Bonn et al. (2023) warn that the lack of preparation in LIS programs has implications for the future of both LIS programs and the LIS profession to build capacity and leadership to effect change in scholarly communication. Students are hungry to do this work yet LIS programs graduate students without the necessary preparation and competencies for a rapidly evolving subdiscipline. This lack of LIS instruction further perpetuates the growth of inadequate preparation for new LIS professionals in scholarly communication leaving academic libraries as key stakeholders in providing substantial support for education and training. To address this gap, Bonn et al. (2020) proposed several strategies to expand scholarly communication topics in LIS instruction including their newly published introductory level textbook *Scholarly communication librarianship and open knowledge* (Bonn et al., 2023) "that may serve as a cornerstone in formal LIS scholarly communication topic instruction..." (p. 14). While on-the-job training is a common feature of employment, LIS programs have a responsibility to ensure students graduate with the necessary preparation for this work.

Since LIS practitioners have a better understanding of the issues in scholarly publishing, it may be time to bring LIS praxis into LIS education to give students a better understanding of the issues in scholarly publishing, how libraries work to address the inequities, as well as new and emerging trends in the field. LIS practitioners can help identify and create opportunities in scholarly communication to collaborate, create and curate relevant content, including social justice for both continuing education as well as adoption within LIS curricula.

So how do libraries help foster a truly global scholarly communication system founded on equitable knowledge exchange? First, understanding the publishing landscape is a key element to prepare early career librarians for this fast-evolving role in libraries. Academic librarians can help demystify the process of publishing in LIS practice. Why does it matter? Despite its intent for equal access as a public good, OA publishing includes costs associated with article processing charges (APCs) for OA journals, which affect the ability of scholars to publish in OA journals. Since most publishers do not provide publishing cost waivers for developing countries, OA is a privilege for Global North researchers. The cost of publishing is prohibitive even where waivers are provided, excluding many researchers from participating in more globalized publishing venues (Nakamura et al., 2023). Using a social justice framework LIS students working with scholarly communication librarians will have practical opportunities to learn more about library publishing as a strategy to help offset author fees for researchers.

Second, libraries are the nexus on campus to collect knowledge produced from around the world and to disseminate knowledge produced on campus around the world. As such, they work with content outside the scope of traditional publishing. Students and researchers are exposed to the science produced by the Global North in their curricula, textbooks, and articles, providing them with a limited overview of potential solutions to global problems. What can libraries offer? Academic libraries are committed to visibility and access to all scholarship. Their efforts to promote a more inclusive global scholarship system include website links to authors or journals from the Global South, e.g. Scientific Electronic Library Online (SciELO) in South America, African Journals Online (AJOL) in Africa, and South Asia Open Archives, to name a few. By being aware of these resources, LIS students can help amplify sources or information from the Global South to increase the understanding of contextual environmental and socioeconomic factors affecting the research results.

Third, as liaisons, librarians work closely with scholars and students to advocate for maximum openness and visibility of all scholarship in the scholarly communication ecosystem. As hosts of OA journals libraries can leverage their institutional and library stated values to align expectations for their hosted journals with social justice principles of diversity, equity, and contribution (Roh, 2016).

Why does it matter? Increasing the participation of historically excluded groups on editorial boards will help amplify different points of view with diverse backgrounds and perspectives. What can libraries do? They can raise awareness with scholars who might value diversity but might not have previously considered its importance in publishing (Roh, 2016). In doing so, libraries could request journals to consider the demographics of their contributors and editorial boards as a prerequisite for library publishing. Library publishing allows new voices into the scholarly ecosystem through collection development and digitized collections. They also expand access through links to promote scholarship from the Global South, e.g. AJOL and SciELO, that supports OA research communication in Latin America. In this way libraries offer solutions to reduce the language barriers for non-native English-speaking authors to scientific publication.

Open access

Open access has coincided with the development of alternative scholarly communication platforms such as Knowledge Unlatched, Open Library of Humanities, Luminos Open Access, and Open Journal Systems. These platforms offer libraries an opportunity to push back against the biased systems of scholarly communication. For this reason, library publishing has emerged as a natural extension of their role as information disseminators to address the failures and inequities in the current publishing ecosystem. Library publishing began as a “natural outgrowth of and corollary to libraries’ investment in scholarly communication, digital scholarship, and data management services, among others,” and its “emergence...can be directly correlated with perceived failures of and inequities in the contemporary scholarly publishing ecosystem” (Lippincott 2017, p.6). Supported by the Library Publishing Coalition and guided by an ethical framework anchored in social justice principles, library publishing is distinctive from other types of scholarly publishing. For example, they support publications that might not otherwise have a voice and allow new voices to find their way into disciplinary conversations, reach new audiences, both academic and public. Library publishing has the potential to impact existing and emerging fields of scholarship and practice in a transformative way. Towards that end, libraries have embraced the Open Journal System (OJS) as an end-to-end scholarly publishing platform to launch new OA journals e.g. *Ars Inveniendi Analytica*, at the University of Texas Libraries, a top-level journal in mathematical analysis that minimizes operating costs with no fees to either readers or authors. The annual cost to run the journal is less than a single author processing charge at some commercial publishers.

Despite libraries’ role in promoting OA, faculty still lack an understanding of the potential roles and changing visions of scholarly communication that includes advocacy for openness. Libraries promote OA in a variety of ways including institutional repositories, catalog records for OA journals and electronic journal lists, to name a few.

New initiatives such as collaboration between libraries and university presses are now more prevalent in publishing OA journals, open monographs, conference proceedings and large-scale digitization of their published collections. Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) Press's Direct to Open (D2O), a diamond OA publishing model, is a gamechanger that levels the field for authors and readers while bringing vital research to communities that need it most (The MIT Press, 2024). New library services such as author/publisher rights determination, hosting open access journals, and exploring new forms of scholarly products, e.g. OERs have expanded and are becoming mainstream activities in libraries. These new and dynamic library roles offer an opportunity for LIS programs to impart a deeper knowledge of the life cycle of scholarship, the environment in which it is created and an understanding of the impact of the inequities in access to the information along with the tools necessary to use that information. Understanding the impact of these disparities is where social justice training is helpful to equip students with a critical lens revealing e.g. what happens when researchers do not have access to the full range of possible research that includes research on sustainable economic, social and political developments. Or, how faculty are impacted when they are not being published when their careers are at stake because publication is central to tenure and promotion.

Embedding social justice in LIS also provides a tool to reflect on library publishing. Are libraries perpetuating the biases and power structures of traditional scholarly publishing or are they using library publishing to interrogate, educate and establish more equitable models of scholarly communication? (Roh, 2016). This work is challenging as reflected in a personal conversation with the editor of a diamond OA journal who acknowledges the Global North bias in scholarly publishing yet feels challenged to select essays for scholarly publishing that lack the rigor and currency of research required for the journal. To fully realize the promise of OA, LIS professionals need to be mindful of policies and practices that may create new barriers for scholars to access or contribute to the scholarly record. The danger of focusing on access but not participation only facilitates the current and inequitable one-way scholarly exchange from the Global North to the Global South. The lack of representation affects not only the diversity of scholarship that is produced and made available; it has the potential for the loss of voices that are not represented in the scholarly record and erasure from knowledge systems at large (Roh et al., 2020). Open access is not perfect but it remains a powerful tool for libraries to address information privilege in scholarly communication and to consider those who may be left behind.

Open educational resources

Open educational resources are rooted in social justice principles and are consistent with scholarly communication practice to support access to information in research, teaching and learning. Access to education is key to economic, social and environmental progress

and OER offers the ability to improve and diversify educational opportunities for all. This idea aligns with the United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization's (UNESCO) sustainability goal *Education for all* (Sustainable Development Goal #4) to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and to promote lifelong learning for all. For years research on OER focused on cost-savings for students but there is a growing body of literature that elevates social justice as a framework to study additional benefits of OER, especially for minority and underrepresented students. For example, Ivory and Pashia (2022) explore the opportunities and challenges of moving the discussion about OER beyond affordability to address the structural inequities found throughout academic and scholarly publishing.

OER are more than free access to learning resources; they create equity, accessibility, parity of participation and offer customization to develop inclusive textbooks. As such they should not replicate the commercial textbook and its inequities. The good news is that faculty have grown more confident in moving away from traditional textbooks that reflect a commitment to providing low-cost or no-cost course materials, thereby reducing financial barriers and promoting equitable access. They are also adopting new pedagogies that leverage technology such as flipped classrooms and blended learning modules. While faculty have grown more confident with using OER in their courses, they are more likely to integrate instructional video and publisher prepared modules. Only a small percentage are creating their own OER (Love & Blankenstein, 2024).

Academic libraries play a key role in supporting OER initiatives as reflected in the recent emergence of a dedicated position to support OER through adoption and creation and to build, publish and maintain an OER platform (Tang & Tseng, 2023). Libraries are often the sole supporters of OER on campus due to the lack of recognition of this work in faculty promotion and tenure processes. For this reason, many OER programs at universities and colleges are launched from the "bottom" and driven by libraries and faculty rather than the administration. Interested faculty usually seek guidance from librarians and value their expertise in authoring or adopting OER with innovative and inclusive content to enhance students' learning experiences. As a result, libraries have embraced new technologies, tools and strategies to support the creation or adoption and use of OERs. While adoption of OER has been slow, there is evidence of growing demand from faculty who need OER support (Love & Blankenstein, 2024).

Libraries support OER through faculty fellowships/grants, expertise and publishing infrastructure. An open education fellowship is a stipend-supported program usually sponsored by the library. At the University of Texas faculty can apply for fellowships which

provide direct librarian-led support in authoring or adopting OERs. In turn, selected faculty commit to making at least one of their courses entirely cost-free in terms of course materials.

While academic libraries have embraced this ideal and strongly support faculty in creating and disseminating OER the current focus is mainly on social justice as access, that is, lowering the cost of textbooks to provide equitable access to all students. A key reason for this is that educators are not aware of how to implement OER and open educational practices with equity in mind creating an opportunity for LIS programs to fill an obvious gap in LIS training (Katz & Van Allen, 2022). Embedding social justice in LIS programs to study and understand these scholarly communication topics seems ideal to prepare LIS students as bystander activists in LIS practice. By leveraging the expertise of OER practitioners in LIS courses will provide students with pragmatic examples of how social justice principles intersect with this work to create new equitable learning experiences. For example, working with faculty, OER librarians can center marginalized perspectives when they identify and co-create OER. By engaging with students and faculty as co-creators OER librarians can help transform the creation of course materials and address social injustice in the classroom. For example, Seiferle-Valencia (2020) engaged graduate students in identifying no-cost, culturally competent materials to support students for whom English is a second language. Another student used bilingual captions on YouTube videos to increase content. Co-creating content with students as partners gives them agency in the development of the process and an opportunity to contribute equally in OER production. Lambert and Fadel (2022) piloted a process of collaborating with the library to convert required texts in 100-level units of a high-enrolment course to OER giving all students equal access to learning materials on day one. Buck and Valentino (2018) created an engaging course to help students understand how scholarly information is created and, more importantly, how it affects their lives and society at large. As more educators begin to focus on the social justice aspects of OER it is imperative for LIS programs to equip graduates with the skills to navigate their roles in contemporary social issues.

These practical steps address inequities that align with social justice principles of inclusion, access and parity of participation. However, publishers are pushing a new business model to reduce textbook costs: inclusive textbook billing. Their stated goal is to reduce textbook costs but their strategies to achieve that goal are starkly different and noteworthy for its lack of social justice principles. Publishers have turned the COVID-19 crisis into an opportunity to focus on digital courseware making it attractive for university administrators who want to reduce the costs of textbooks for their students.

With automatic opt-in to access the material on day one, students are effectively subject to the publisher's terms and textbook costs are added to their tuition and fee bill unless they choose to opt out. It is clear to see how publishers benefit from this business model, but it can exclude students who are in the most critical need (SPARC). These competing realities exist on many campuses where university administrations prioritize automatic textbook billing programs over OER. As with any innovation, OER faces a number of challenges. For faculty the most pressing is the question of quality and the daunting task of sifting through high quality material. For librarians, adopting and promoting OER is contingent on knowledge, skills and appreciation of these resources to increase their likelihood of adoption, creating an undeniable opportunity for LIS programs to embed social justice principles.

Conclusion

Scholarly communication literacy is a core competency for academic librarians to support this fast-growing field and social justice provides a critical lens to address the inequalities in the current scholarly publishing system. The present disconnect between LIS training and LIS praxis leaves graduates ill-prepared to address professional demands and calls for expansion of LIS education and training to realign its curricula with the current climate and needs of the academic community. That expansion can and should be undertaken by both LIS programs and libraries, failing which will have significant implications for both to build capacity and leadership to effect change in scholarly communication.

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