

# Defending DEI and the Politics of Inclusion by Engaging Them: Postcards from the Edge of Someone Else's Dream

JOSEPH WINBERRY

---

---

## ABSTRACT

This article posits that the most important endeavor library and information science (LIS) community members can undertake to defend DEI and the politics of inclusion is to continue to engage them. I use autoethnographic reflection and analysis to conceptualize strategies for how library stakeholders can grow collective DEI engagement. The result of these processes is the development of five snapshots, or “postcards,” from my identity as a gay man and my work as a pre-tenure faculty member to illustrate the DEI engagement opportunities in the field. These opportunities include: 1) considering the positionality from which we do our work, 2) imagining how our unique combinations of identities, perspectives, and experiences can contribute to DEI efforts, 3) undertaking the various activities which support these efforts, 4) empathetically and authentically growing the coalition of DEI supporters, and 5) recognizing that outcomes of success or failure do not represent the end but the continuation of the journey toward social justice for all in society. Taken together, these strategies represent one model for how DEI engagement can continue to expand in the LIS field. I hope my examples will encourage others to consider a new or reinforced commitment to DEI in the LIS field and beyond, in part by examining their own journeys, sharing their own postcards, and developing their own strategies for supporting the politics of inclusion that every supporter can use and build on.

## Introduction

When I first read the call for this special issue of *The Political Librarian*, my idea engine went into overdrive. There are many directions one could go in the name of “defending DEI and the politics of inclusion” in this moment (EveryLibrary Institute 2025). I thought about contextualizing social justice into the broader economic justice (see Williams 2017; 2025) or doing a literature review on how mentions of “Trump” in library and information science (LIS) research might illuminate a librarianship-informed framework that complements other anti-autocracy academic resources (Lewandowsky et al. 2025). The possibilities seemed endless.

But when it came time to write on these or other ideas, I just could not. I initially assigned blame to the to-do list, but there was something more fundamental to my writer's block than just the organization of tasks and finding the time to do them. I think there is a

different message I am supposed to give instead. While maybe not as profound or innovative as some other ideas, there is power in the simplicity of my argument in this article: The best way for us to defend DEI and the politics of inclusion is by engaging them.

## Conceptual Framing

This section elaborates on my argument by describing and contextualizing each of its components within the context of social justice.

### Defining Social Justice

What is DEI? This question alludes to both a strength and a vulnerability in the quest for organizing around, implementing steps toward, and achieving the interrelated but distinct concepts of diversity, equity, and inclusion: the ability to define and describe them in various ways. My purpose here is not to provide every possible definition and description of the acronym. If you are not already well versed in some of these combinations, there are many good faith resources—such as the NAACP (2025) website—which provide definitions and examples as well as reasons for DEI. Instead, I will define DEI in relation to the politics of inclusion.

What are the politics of inclusion? Much like DEI, politics is a term that can be defined and described in innumerable ways. When I refer to politics here, I do not limit it to the formal political process of campaigns, elections, and governance—though that is certainly part of it. I recognize politics here more broadly as “the set of activities that are associated with making decisions in groups, or other forms of power relations among individuals, such as the distribution of status or resources” (Wikipedia 2025). If we are thinking about “politics of inclusion” in relation to DEI, it would make sense that decisions being made about the distribution of resources and power in society should consider the diversity of that society and inequities brought on by marginalization of certain groups in society in comparison to others, as well as the value of being inclusive in that process.

Said another way, I would describe DEI and the politics of inclusion as being part of the larger vision of social justice. I define social justice as both a process through which people must educate themselves and others to identify and understand the varied nature or *diversity* of the human experience and take actions toward increasing fairness or *equity* between broader society and groups who have historically been marginalized because of their differences in order to ensure that there is the *inclusion* of everyone in the *politics* of power and resource distribution, and the positive outcomes which can come to historically marginalized groups and society by pursuing this process (Cooke et al. 2016; Mehra et al. 2009; Winberry 2023).

### Defending Social Justice

Having defined DEI and the politics of inclusion as part of social justice, now it is time—per the paper’s stated argument—to defend it. This begs the question: Why does social justice need defending?

Again, my purpose here is not to define and describe every area of contention around social justice; readers who have yet to read and think deeply on these topics can make up their own mind after reading this article, as well as the sources cited throughout or elsewhere (your local public librarian would be happy to help you in your search). But the reality is that no process of distributing power and resources occurs without friction and challenges. History can attest that the quest for social justice has been no exception to this rule in the United States

(Heumann and Joiner 2020; Hirshman 2012; Williams 2013) or around the world (Gandhi 2008; Klein 2025; Polanco 1997).

DEI, the politics of inclusion, and their historical equivalents have been derided for various reasons such as theism, which is believing that certain religious views should dictate social freedom (Frame 2021; Hitchens 2008; Plantinga 1987), or majoritarianism, which is the belief that majority groups should not have to acknowledge or address disparities that social minorities experience (Abizadeh 2021; Abrams 2022; Rufo et al. 2023). Indeed, the controversy is often less about whether social injustices toward disadvantaged groups occur but rather what they say about society and what—if anything—should be done about them (Klinenberg and Sherman 2021; Ravecca et al. 2024; Serwer 2019). Similarly, while public polling indicates splits on the focus or effectiveness of DEI initiatives, there is general recognition that certain groups have been marginalized and that bringing attention to and ending social disparities is a good thing (Bowman 2025; Rice et al. 2025).

In taking up this special issue's mandate, it should be no surprise that I argue in favor of attempting social justice by taking actions to minimize disparities between groups advantaged and disadvantaged by the system in which we all live. But this statement is admittedly broad and requires focusing for the purposes of this paper.

### Engaging Social Justice

This is where the last part of my argument comes into service: defending DEI and the politics of inclusion by engaging them. I do not mean for that to sound as flip or glib as it understandably could. The truth is, the dark times that many of us have been working to combat for nearly a decade have fallen upon us (Jennings-Roche and Jaeger 2025; Mehra and Winberry 2021).

With a Supreme Court stacked in defiance of the people (Suk Gersen 2022; Wheeler 2020) and a gerrymandered Congress (Wolfe 2025) who has ceded its responsibilities to the executive (Cropf 2025), we are left with a president-in-name-only who has vowed to automatically use the full weight of the unrestrained federal government to crush individuals, groups, and institutions who champion DEI and cherished American values like free speech and intellectual freedom (Collins and Hamlin 2025; Finnegan 2025; Sentner and Johansen 2025). Unsurprisingly, given their community and cultural importance, funding and directives for museum and library research and practice—including previously awarded funding for some of my work (Patel 2025; Winberry et al. 2025)—have not been spared in his assertion of control and revisionism (American Library Association 2025; Italie 2025).

In the face of this unprecedented weaponization of our government against us—its citizens, residents, and taxpayers—many people are understandably scared (Khardori 2025). Now, when circumstances call on powerful individuals and institutions to flex their strengths and double down on their long-stated lip service to DEI, too many voices are silent. They are self-censoring and capitulating, often without any clear legal reason to do so. While as the saying goes, silence can be deafening, we must not be cowed by the absence of supportive noise. We must continue to make our own with one another—a cacophony for an unapologetically better world.

Now is not the time to give up. No, in this moment when the political system is dominated by a figure and movement hostile to recognizing, celebrating, and building on the fullness of the human experience responsible for making and keeping America (and the world)

great, we must exercise the politics of inclusion the only way we can: by “voting” for them every day with our feet, wallets, voices, actions, and engagements.

But what does it mean to “engage” them, particularly within LIS? The library is, ironically enough, an apt metaphor. The health and future availability of library collections, programming, and spaces are often dependent on them being “checked out” or used. The same is true, I argue, for the future of DEI. Rather than accept words without the backing of law or the strength of conscience, we must exercise the levers at our disposal. In other words, and to tap into something I often hear in my other professional identity as a gerontologist, “Use it or lose it!”

We must hold (and attend) more events. We must write and get the word out to venues and audiences who might not otherwise know about or seek us out. We must contact our legislators and organize campaigns that prevent them from ignoring us. We must organize and peacefully protest like civil rights leaders before us. Whether you read this article as a library practitioner, scholar, or supporter, there are steps that we all can take (and may already be taking) to fully engage DEI and the politics of inclusion in our daily activities, larger life, and professional journeys.

### **Research Question**

Beyond just saying this broadly, we need to think more specifically about what we can do to give those so inclined the maximized possibility of making change with the generous donation of their increasingly shrinking time/attention (circumstances worthy of their own lamenting elsewhere). Toward this end, I ask the research question: What strategies can be taken to increase engagement with social justice in the LIS context? To answer this question, each of us must start by examining ourselves.

### **Methodology**

All of us who support DEI and libraries have identities, perspectives, and experiences that are valuable in developing strategies for how we and others can best engage with the politics of inclusion in our current moment. The research methodology most useful for this endeavor is autoethnography.

A Google AI-generated synthesis (accessed October 31, 2025) states that autoethnography “is a research method that combines autobiography with ethnographic research, where the researcher analyzes their own personal experiences and emotions to understand a social, cultural, or psychological phenomenon. It differs from simple autobiography by critically examining personal experiences as a form of data analysis, connecting individual stories to broader cultural and theoretical concepts.” Autoethnography has a rich methodological history with roots in anthropology, qualitative paradigms, and ethnographic research prior to being conceptualized in ways relevant to the above synthesis in the 1970s (Hayano 1979; Heider 1975).

The methodology was developed across multiple decades and appeared in other fields such as LIS, albeit often discussed as underutilized in our field (Lawal and Bitso 2020; Guzik 2013; Michels 2010). In more recent years, autoethnography has been used by various LIS scholars as a way of challenging exclusive structures and institutions within the discipline from a particular positionality (Cooke 2019; Cooke and Sánchez 2019; Mehra 2019; Winberry and Gray 2022). While social justice is increasingly viewed as an important value of LIS education, research, and practice in recent years, its historic exclusion of certain groups and stubborn

homogeneity seen in the library workforce despite efforts to diversify demonstrate the continued value of exploring the politics of inclusion from various perspectives (Cooke 2016; Winberry and Bishop 2021).

In response to its purpose and value, autoethnography can be conceptualized in various forms. In attempting to identify strategies for championing social justice in the LIS field, I have considered what I have learned from my own journey so far. Several studies have talked about postcards as an allegorical or literal tool for subjective personal introspection or autoethnography (Bouvier 2024; Creagh 2011; Holbrook 2005). Postcards are often seen as representing a particular moment in time, forever contextualized by the restful vacation, invigorating adventure, or personal reflection that enabled their writing, mailing, reading, and responding (Bonarou 2021; Ferguson 2005; Rogan and Brown 2005).

In keeping with the journey metaphor, I have organized my analysis into five postcards, each of which provides a snapshot of my narrative analysis, followed by the specific strategy I identified for engaging social justice as a process with outcomes.

## Findings

### Postcard # 1: Live a Dream Daily Rather than Wait for Vacation!

For many of us, DEI is not a bumper sticker, a snappy slogan, or a way to pad the stock price. Its promise is one made for our very lives. As a gay man, I am reminded every day when I come home to a loving husband with whom I have built a home over thirteen years, that I am living a life I never would have thought possible as a teenager. It often feels like something out of a dream.

But this dream I live every day is not my own. It is the dream of a gay man who was more like me than I will ever know. A gay man who, for all our similarities, was unlike me in the sense that he lacked the random twist of fate which saw me born in 1990 rather than 1940 or 1890—a twist of fate that saw me as the beneficiary of his sacrifices rather than the one who had to make them. I do my best never to take that for granted. Thankfully, there are always people ready to remind me how fragile freedom is.

I know many others across the diversity of human experience understand what it feels like to be living someone else's dream. We live our lives for ourselves and for our loved ones. And for the dreamers as well.

### Strategy # 1: Identifying You

While conducting my introspection on this topic and preparing to share the results with you, I have had to consider how my positionality and full identity engage with the topic as well. As a PhD-holding white male and as a gay, first-generation, pre-tenure professor, my full identity includes privileges and disadvantages within the LIS field, academia, and broader society. My hope is that my examples might encourage others to brainstorm and share their own strategies for how we, as a field, can fully, deliberately, and continually engage DEI and the politics of inclusion to share and demonstrate their value and essentialness to others for the betterment of society for everyone.

Brainstorm who you are so that you can consider how you can best contribute. This might involve writing out a list, talking it through with a friend, or drawing a mind map. Doing these and more may help you consider all the possibilities.

**Postcard #2: Hello from Unique Combinations!**

I never intended to be a Critical iGerontologist (my self-description, given that my scholarly interests lie at the intersection of library and information science, gerontology, and social justice). It happened by accident. As a history and political science graduate, my time as an administrative assistant at a nonprofit, and a flurry of rejected history PhD applications, concentrated my mind on what I might do next.

Seemingly still wed to history, I decided to go to “library school” to become an archivist and leave nonprofit work behind. But just as I achieved the golden ticket that was library school admission in 2016, I learned that nonprofit work was not ready to leave me. I got a job offer to lead Knoxville, Tennessee’s inaugural elder abuse response program.

Prior to the chance interview, I had never even heard of or considered elder abuse—physical, emotional, sexual, financial, and/or neglect forms of harm perpetuated against someone because of real or perceived vulnerabilities of aging. But when faced with the choice to follow my newish dream into library school or fight elder abuse, I thought about how I owed so much to the person I was because of the love of my grandparents and their friends, whom I spent considerable time with growing up. I took a risk and delayed graduate school matriculation by a year. It proved to be one of the most impactful decisions of my life to date.

Once I was concurrently seeking my LIS degree and managing the elder abuse response program, I began seeing many connections between the two. For instance, many of the concepts I learned from scholars like Elfreda Chatman, Lynn Westbrook, and Nicole Cooke, such as information access, behavior, and justice, helped me to think about how the Office on Aging I worked at could better meet the often-linked information and service needs of older adults. These and other “aha” moments, such as an unexpected conversation with older gay men about their aging-related information needs, led me down the path of pursuing my doctorate.

It is clear now that my time spent in the LIS scholar-elder abuse responder duality is what set the stage for my Critical iGerontologist identity. But I did not realize how my work was focusing on the intersection of LIS, gerontology, and social justice until my mentor Bharat Mehra pointed it out. Afterward, I decided to formally claim this area as the one I hoped to spend my career contributing to and name it. It has been my focus ever since and likely always will be.

**Strategy # 2: Looking Through Your Unique Lens**

It may be a cliché, but it remains the truth: No two people are the same. The first step toward defending DEI and the politics of inclusion is to brainstorm—individually and collectively—how your experiences, goals, identities, perspectives, and strengths can best be used to help pursue social justice. While I had long found myself working on issues relevant to older adults in LIS, the initial conversation I had with gay men led to my dissertation because the discussion helped me realize that as a gay man myself who understood aging services and information theory, I was well positioned to meet the aging-related information and service needs of them and other members of the LGBTQ+ community in East Tennessee. Once you have considered how you can best contribute, you will be well prepared for the next step.

**Postcard #3: Wishing You Were (Everyw)Here!**

Work in nearly every field—including LIS—will be greatly impacted by the historic and rapid societal aging currently underway. I worry that, rather than making the necessary

investments to ensure older people age with dignity, there will be an emphasis on managing rather than partnering with this population. In considering how I could use my unique combination to make the greatest positive impact, the areas of research, education, and practice came to mind.

As a member of academe, my colleagues and I conduct research, which is a core component of educating future LIS professionals. That education, in turn, informs the practice undertaken by those students-turned-professionals (and vice versa). I pursued a project that sought to serve older adults across these three areas.

After surveying students at many of the American Library Association (ALA)-accredited master's programs, it became clear that while many stated they were open to considering how they might best serve older adults, they received little to no exposure to older adults in their degree programs. However, there are many reasons why elders are underrepresented, and realistically, getting every ALA-accredited program to provide a class on them is as difficult a process as it is unlikely to be an outcome. In response, I have been overseeing a team of LIS students who interview older adults to determine what they would like public library students and professionals to know about serving them. This—and a forthcoming survey with professionals—will help me develop a free, online training series for students and professionals that centers on the perspectives of older adults and contributes toward ensuring, rather than merely wishing, that my work can have influence across several elements of the field.

### Strategy # 3: Activities for Change

Having brainstormed how you can take action, the next step is to organize and implement your plan for doing so. My unique combination has helped me imagine how I might have the greatest impact on older adults through LIS scholarship. While it is still too early to know what the actual results will be, I hope that my plan for developing a free and openly available online training series for those serving older patrons in their library, based on what older adults request, will help you think about how you could center the perspectives of whatever population you seek to work with. While the *what* of your work will be highly individualized, the ultimate goal of social justice remains the same across all our differences.

My activities often focus on my research because it is part of who I am and how I see the world. One social justice-minded activity is writing more on marginalized or underrepresented populations in the field, such as older adults or intersectional groups like LGBT+ older adults. Another activity might be seeking out opportunities to cite authors from underrepresented groups who may not get cited because of the topic of their work, rather than concerns about the considerable strength of their writing and arguments. Others in the field work toward programs that give funding to library students who are underrepresented in the field (such as the LIS Spectrum Program) or to create courses and books that expand social justice understanding within an LIS context. You may think of your activities around your daily library work, teaching, talking up the value of libraries to your friends and neighbors, or something different entirely. We each have our own set of actions we can take to support social justice.

### Postcard # 4: Glad to Be Back Home!

Everyone enjoys a good vacation. But when it's over, people often look forward to going back home. For me, the concept of home represents safety, support, and comfort. One reason I think DEI has become an easy target is that the term is not intuitive or comfortable for

everyone. In response, I have begun speaking about the importance of diversity and inclusion as dignity and respect in some of my work.

For instance, when presenting as part of a training team on the need for service providers to meet the aging-related information and service needs of LGBTQ+ older adults in East Tennessee, we talked about how, as service providers, it is not their job to judge or even necessarily agree with every aspect of a person's life and perspective. You are there to serve, and everyone deserves to be treated with dignity and respect, no matter who they are. There were some folks who came into those trainings having shared in an anonymous survey that they were not supportive of the LGBTQ+ community, only to report feeling differently by the end.

This does not work for every circumstance, nor do I offer this one example as representative of every possible outcome. However, you make it clear that DEI is not about giving anyone "special" rights, as some have claimed, but rather about allowing everyone a chance to live the life of their (or their ancestors') dreams.

#### **Strategy # 4: Building Coalitions with Communities**

As we continually consider how to defend DEI and the politics of inclusion, the fourth step is to recognize the importance of bringing people into the movement. What are the various groups you engage with as part of your library work? This could include fellow researchers and teachers, students, other colleagues, patrons, external partners, and more.

There is also a chance to bring in new people if we are open-minded about what common ground looks and even sounds like. While rights-based and justice-laden phraseology is useful, sometimes simpler language and values-based arguments can bring others into a coalition that broadly supports the intentions of DEI. This does not mean that we must work in partnership with those who wish us harm. Instead, it is about making it easier to engage with people who wish us well, even if they do not quite know how to say or embody it without our support.

#### **Postcard #5: Can't Wait to Go Back Again!**

Like many believers in social justice, it has been a difficult year for me in more ways than are interesting to read (or write) about. But when I have felt at my lowest, it has not been my own voice that lifted me up. It has been the voices of others.

Community offers a powerful escape from the challenges of life. It is also represented in different ways. One of the most impactful community moments of the past year was attending and listening to the perspectives of members of the ALA Black Caucus at the 2025 annual conference. I am not a member of that community, but in the larger, shared quest for social justice across society, I try to do what I can to be an ally.

In other situations, there is an ability to build community around issues or identity factors more representative of who you are. Recognizing the importance of DEI across the lifespan, several researchers, library practitioners, and community supporters came together to form the ALA's Elder Justice Task Force. Together—as a community of aging services providers working in concert with people sixty-five years and older—we have sought to challenge ageism in our profession and provide pro-older adult support by offering trainings and showcasing resources for serving older adults in libraries. Engaging with all our members and pursuing social justice has given me the strength to keep moving forward when I could not do so alone.



## Strategy # 5: Outcomes as Beginnings, Not Ends

Having brainstormed how you could possibly contribute, planned and implemented that plan, and sought to bring inactive people into the work, the final step I recommend for defending DEI and the politics of inclusion is to recognize that outcomes are beginnings rather than ends. Sometimes we will achieve what we hoped to. Sometimes, we do not get everything accomplished, or worse, even when we do it all, the results are not what we hoped for. Either way, regardless of the result, we must learn from the outcomes and move forward as appropriate.

The cyclical nature of the work is an important reminder of personal and community care. Keep doing what you can, and encourage others doing the work to do the same. This can be as simple as showing up to events and providing a smile and an affirmative response to the presenters. The speaker and the audience both benefit in such a scenario. We all have so much to learn about the beautiful mosaic that is the human experience. Sometimes, we get to be the student, as in my visit with the ALA Black Caucus; other times, like when we helped start the Elder Justice Task Force, we get to be the teacher. Either way, the education is ongoing and never finished. Rather than discouraging us, that should help us move forward. Fighting for social justice is always worth it. At least when working in community, we never have to do the work alone.

## Discussion

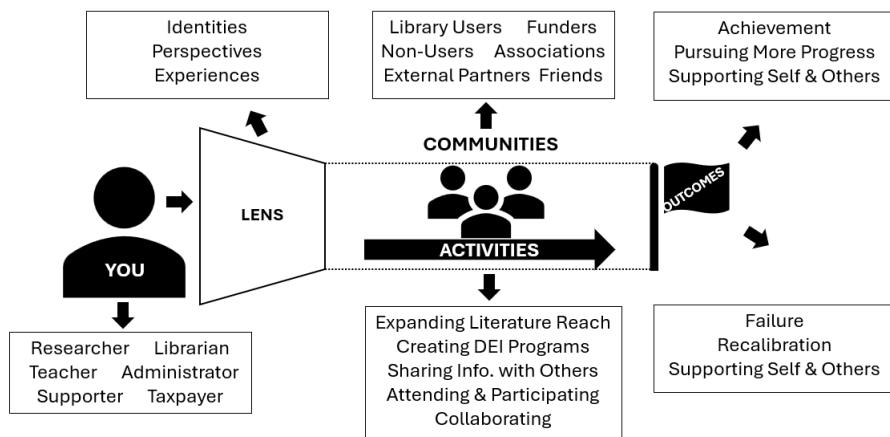


Figure 1. Modeling social justice engagement as LIS process.

While each postcard individually provides a snapshot, together they can tell a story. The strategies emerging from the postcards of my autoethnographic reflection are organized as a story in figure 1. Inspired by Brenda Dervin's (2008) visualization of the sense-making process, the figure includes elements of the meta-story of engaging social justice within the LIS context.

Everyone in the LIS profession has a stake in social justice, regardless of their individual mosaic, because intellectual freedom is such a foundational concept in the field (Boll 1953;

Krug 2017). While social justice and intellectual freedom are distinct concepts, it is impossible to achieve information justice without allowing everyone the opportunity to access, use, and share ideas that are of interest to them and their identity groups, as they define them (Knox 2020). This should be a point that can win support across the broadest coalition of field members (Antelman 2025; Shockey 2016).

While Crenshaw's (1989) concept of intersectionality often receives criticism from right-wing figures for what they perceive as variations of *trying to out-victim others* (Ravecca et al. 2024; Roth 2020), the recognition of intersecting forms of marginalized identities has as a precursor—the recognition that all people have full identities shaped by who you are, what you believe, and what you have experienced. There is growing recognition in the field that intersectionality informs library practice, from the perspectives of both the librarian and the patron, including what their specific information needs are (Chou and Pho 2018; Cooke 2016; Murphy 2019; Winberry 2025). More focus on intersectionality is needed to recognize and champion the true diversity of society, which shapes information and community building.

There are numerous activities that can be undertaken to support social justice, depending upon a person's role. Some of these activities are rather traditional within academic scholarship, such as curriculum development (Cooke et al. 2016), community-minded research (Winberry and Gray 2022), and diversity-minded library practice (Chou and Pho 2018). But these activities might also be less traditional, such as reaching out to personal networks—which may contain untapped, vocal supporters of social justice in librarianship—with the right amount and type of engagement.

Communities within the LIS field range from the traditional to the expected, such as library users and library board members. But communities such as Friends groups can be valuable allies in the fight against book bans, for instance, which are often considered a classic intellectual freedom—and perhaps social justice—intersection in the field (Winberry and O'Donnell forthcoming). Community is essential to completing and sustaining the work, so there is always a need for additional focus on community dynamics and social justice within LIS scholarship.

Outcomes take various forms in social justice work, especially in the current moment. Victories, when reached, should be celebrated; the results of the November 2025 elections, for instance, as well as the (at least temporary) reinstatement of my IMLS grant just as this paper was going to “print” suggests a growing backlash electorally as well as judicially to the president's policies (EveryLibrary Institute 2025b, Yilek and Walsh 2025). But when an outright victory cannot be achieved, there may be value in considering whether a partial victory can be negotiated (Crowley 2025). As social justice becomes increasingly challenged in parts of the country and the world, more research should explore what constitutes an acceptable—if not preferred—result in DEI and political inclusion work, so that we may set a foundation on which to build.

The work of electoral politics is something each of us may choose to engage with (or not) individually or in association with others. But the work of the LIS field, in many ways, takes place outside the voting booth. We must work to build the broadest coalition possible in support of common values like dignity, the freedom to read, and public access for all. The implementation of this model represents one possible contribution toward building such a coalition. My hope in sharing it with others is that they will reflect on it and extend it through their own introspection.

## Conclusion

None of us knows what the future has in store. Indeed, looking across the current landscape, there are reasons to suspect that things will get worse before they get better. There may come a time—not all that long from now—when we each will stand at a crossroads and must decide whether we can be our true selves and still properly serve the full public without detouring from the library sphere, for a time or permanently.

But regardless of what lies ahead, we must never forget the dreams that brought us here or, more importantly, the people who dreamed them first. I stand with all the dreamers. I hope that you do too. We each have our own unique contributions to make in the quest for a world where—whether you call it diversity and equity, dignity and respect, or the politics of inclusion—everyone can be fully, consequentially present in our lives, our libraries, our communities, our country, and our world.

My hope in sending you the social justice postcards about brainstorming, planning and implementing, expanding the coalition, and supporting others doing the work throughout all possible outcomes is that they might inspire you to keep going, to keep working, and to keep believing in the dreams that brought us here and that will—in due time—carry us to new heights yet.

## References

- Abizadeh, Arash. 2021. "Counter-Majoritarian Democracy: Persistent Minorities, Federalism, and the Power of Numbers." *American Political Science Review* 115 (3): 742–56. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0003055421000198>.
- Abrams, Benjamin. 2022. "The Rise of Despotic Majoritarianism." *Democratic Theory* 9 (1): 73–86. <https://doi.org/10.3167/dt.2022.090105>.
- American Library Association (ALA). 2025. "ALA Statement on White House Assault on the Institute of Museum and Library Services." March 15. <https://www.ala.org/news/2025/03/ala-statement-white-house-assault-institute-museum-and-library-services>.
- Antelman, Kristin. 2025. "Respecting Privacy of Thought in DEI Training." *College & Research Libraries* 86 (3): 430–48. <https://doi.org/10.5860/crl.86.3.430>.
- Boll, John J. 1953. "The American Library Association and Intellectual Freedom." Occasional paper, no. 35, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, Graduate School of Library Science.
- Bonarou, Christina. 2021. "The Poetics of Travel Through Unravelling Visual Representations on Postcards: A Critical Semiotics Analysis." *Journal of Tourism, Heritage & Services Marketing* 7 (1): 44–53. [https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract\\_id=3783730#](https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=3783730#).
- Bouvier, Lauren. 2024. "Exploring Postcards as an Accessible Creative Method." In *Creative Research Methods for Critical Event Studies*, edited by Louise Platt, Rebecca Finkel, and Briony Sharp, 86–100. Routledge.
- Bowman, Karlyn. 2025. "How Popular is DEI?" *American Enterprise Institute*, February 3. <https://www.aei.org/op-eds/how-popular-is-dei/>.
- Chou, Rose L., and Annie Pho, eds. 2018. *Pushing the Margins: Women of Color and Intersectionality in LIS*. Library Juice Press.
- Collins, Paul M., Jr., and Rebecca Hamlin. 2025. "Anti-DEI Guidance from Trump Administration Misinterprets the Law and Guts Educators' Free Speech Rights." *The Conversation*, February 26. <https://theconversation.com/anti-dei-guidance-from-trump-administration-misinterprets-the-law-and-guts-educators-free-speech-rights-250574>.

- Cooke, Nicole A. 2016. *Information Services to Diverse Populations: Developing Culturally Competent Library Professionals*. 1st ed. Bloomsbury Publishing.
- Cooke, Nicole A. 2019. "Impolite Hostilities and Vague Sympathies: Academia as a Site of Cyclical Abuse." *Journal of Education for Library and Information Science* 60 (3): 223–30. <https://doi.org/10.3138/jelis.2019-0005>.
- Cooke, Nicole A., and Joe O. Sánchez. 2019. "Getting It on the Record: Faculty of Color in Library and Information Science." *Journal of Education for Library and Information Science* 60 (3): 169–81. <https://doi.org/10.3138/jelis.60.3.01>.
- Cooke, Nicole A., Miriam E. Sweeney, and Safiya Umoja Noble. 2016. "Social Justice as Topic and Tool: An Attempt to Transform an LIS Curriculum and Culture." *The Library Quarterly* 86 (1): 107–24. <https://doi.org/10.1086/684147>.
- Creagh, Robyn. 2011. "Fragments of a Scene: Voicing Urban Memories Through Postcards." Curtin University. <https://hgs.curtin.edu.au/wp-content/uploads/sites/30/2017/05/Robyn-Creagh.pdf>.
- Crenshaw, Kimberle. 1989. "Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics." *University of Chicago Legal Forum* 1989 (1): Article 8. <https://chicagounbound.uchicago.edu/uclf/vol1989/iss1/8>.
- Croft, Robert. 2025. "Trump's Quiet Coup over the Budget." *The Fulcrum*, November 7 <https://thefulcrum.us/governance-legislation/trump-budget-power-grab-impoundment-control-act>.
- Crowley, Bill. 2025. "Fight if You Can Win. Otherwise, Negotiate." *The Political Librarian*, Special Issue, 8 (1). <https://doi.org/10.7936/pollib.8986>.
- Dervin, Brenda. 2008. "Interviewing as Dialectical Practice: Sensemaking Methodology as Exemplar." Paper presented at the International Association for Media and Communication Research Annual Meeting, Sweden.
- EveryLibrary Institute. 2025. "Call for Papers - Next Special Issue of The Political Librarian on Defending DEI and the Politics of Inclusion." June 19. [https://www.everylibraryinstitute.org/political\\_librarian\\_call\\_for\\_papers\\_dei\\_special\\_issue](https://www.everylibraryinstitute.org/political_librarian_call_for_papers_dei_special_issue).
- Ferguson, Sandra. 2005. "'A Murmur of Small Voices': On the Picture Postcard in Academic Research." *Archivaria* 60 (September): 167–84. <https://archivaria.ca/index.php/archivaria/article/view/12520>.
- Finnegan, Molly. 2025. "Read the Full Letter from Universities Opposing 'Government Intrusion.'" *PBS News*, April 24. <https://www.pbs.org/newshour/education/read-the-full-letter-from-universities-opposing-government-intrusion>.
- Frame, Nicole. 2021. "Intragroup Differences of the Non-Religious: Attitudes Towards Same-Sex Marriage and Same-Sex Adoption in the United States." *Journal of Homosexuality* 68 (13): 2285–2300. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00918369.2020.1736430>.
- Gandhi, Rajmohan. 2008. *Gandhi: The Man, His People, and the Empire*. University of California Press.
- Google AI 2025. October 31. - this was just googling "autoethnography" and seeing the AI synthesis that comes up. Not sure if it needs to be cited in the reference list or not?
- Guzik, Elysia. 2013. "Representing Ourselves in Information Science Research: A Methodological Essay on Autoethnography/La représentation de nous-mêmes dans la recherche en sciences de l'information: Essai méthodologique sur l'auto-ethnographie." *Canadian Journal of Information and Library Science* 37 (4): 267–83. <https://doi.org/10.1353/ils.2013.0025>.

- Hayano, David M. 1979. "Auto-Ethnography: Paradigms, Problems, and Prospects." *Human Organization* 38 (1): 99–104. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/44125560>.
- Heider, Karl G. 1975. "What Do People Do? Dani Auto-Ethnography." *Journal of Anthropological Research* 31 (1): 3–17. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/3629504>.
- Heumann, Judith, and Kristen Joiner. 2020. *Being Heumann: An Unrepentant Memoir of a Disability Rights Activist*. Beacon Press.
- Hirshman, Linda. 2012. *Victory: The Triumphant Gay Revolution*. HarperCollins.
- Hitchens, Christopher Eric. 2008. *God Is Not Great: How Religion Poisons Everything*. McClelland & Stewart.
- Holbrook, Morris B. 2005. "Customer Value and Autoethnography: Subjective Personal Introspection and the Meanings of a Photograph Collection." *Journal of Business Research* 58 (1): 45–61. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0148-2963\(03\)00079-1](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0148-2963(03)00079-1).
- Italie, Hillel. 2025. "Smithsonian Removes Trump from an Exhibit's Impeachment Display, but Says It's Temporary." *PBS News*, August 1. <https://www.pbs.org/newshour/politics/smithsonian-removes-trump-from-an-exhibits-impeachment-display-but-says-its-temporary>
- Jennings-Roche, Allison, and Paul T. Jaeger. 2025. "A Love Letter to Libraries in Our Darkest Hour: An Introduction to a Special Issue of The Political Librarian, 'The 2024 Election and the Future of Libraries.'" *The Political Librarian*, Special Issue, 8 (1). <https://doi.org/10.7936/pollib.9018>.
- Khardori, Ankush. 2025. "Trump Is Weaponizing the Government Against His Enemies. It Doesn't Mean He'll Succeed." *Politico*, August 28. <https://www.politico.com/news/magazine/2025/08/28/trump-revenge-tour-weaponize-government-column-00529277>.
- Klein, Shira. 2025. "The Growing Rift Between Holocaust Scholars over Israel/Palestine." *Journal of Genocide Research* (January): 1–21. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14623528.2024.2448061>.
- Klinenberg, Eric, and Melina Sherman. 2021. "Face Mask Face-Offs: Culture and Conflict in the COVID-19 Pandemic." *Public Culture* 33 (3): 441–66. <https://doi.org/10.1215/08992363-9262919>.
- Knox, Emily J. M. 2020. "Intellectual Freedom and Social Justice: Tensions Between Core Values in American Librarianship." *Open Information Science* 4 (1): 1–10. <https://doi.org/10.1515/opsis-2020-0001>.
- Krug, Judith F. 2017. "Intellectual Freedom and the American Library Association (ALA): Historical Overview [ELIS Classic]." In *Encyclopedia of Library and Information Sciences*, edited by John D. McDonald and Michael Levine-Clark, 2387–97. 4th ed. Routledge.
- Lawal, Vicki, and Connie Bitso. 2020. "Autoethnography in Information Science Research: A Transformative Generation and Sharing of Knowledge or a Fallacy?" In *Handbook of Research on Connecting Research Methods for Information Science Research*, edited by Patrick Ngulube, 114–38. IGI Global Scientific Publishing.
- Lewandowsky, Stephan, Vera Kempe, Konstantinos Armaos, et al. 2025. "The Anti-Autocracy Handbook: A Scholar's Guide to Navigating Democratic Backsliding." <https://zenodo.org/records/15696097>.
- Mehra, Bharat. 2019. The Non-White Man's Burden in LIS Education: Critical Constructive Nudges. *Journal of Education for Library and Information Science* 60 (3): 198–207. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/26754757>.

- Mehra, Bharat, Kevin S. Rioux, and Kendra S. Albright. 2009. "Social Justice in Library and Information Science." In *Encyclopedia of Library and Information Sciences*, edited by Marcia J. Bates and Mary Niles Maack. 3rd ed. CRC Press.
- Mehra, Bharat, and Joseph Winberry. 2021. "'Politic Talks' in Academic Libraries of the South to Address a Global Democracy Recession in the United States: An Exploratory Website Analysis." In *Libraries and the Global Retreat of Democracy: Confronting Polarization, Misinformation, and Suppression*, edited by Natalie Greene Taylor, Karen Kettlich, Ursula Gorham, and Paul T. Jaeger, 183–210. Emerald Publishing Limited.
- Michels, David H. 2010. The Place of the Person in LIS Research: An Exploration in Methodology and Representation/La place de la personne dans la recherche en bibliothéconomie et en sciences de l'information: exploration des méthodologies et des représentations. *Canadian Journal of Information and Library Science* 34 (2): 161–83. <https://dx.doi.org/10.1353/ils.0.0001>.
- Murphy, Ondrea M. 2019. Pushing the Margins: Women of Color and Intersectionality in LIS. *Theological Librarianship* 12 (1): 61–62. <https://doi.org/10.31046/tl.v12i1.540>.
- NAACP. 2025. "Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion." Accessed November 11. <https://naacp.org/campaigns/diversity-equity-and-inclusion>.
- Patel, Sajni. 2025. "Executive Order Jeopardizes School of Information and Library Science Research Funding." *The Daily Tar Heel*, May 13. <https://www.dailytarheel.com/article/university-sils-library-research-federal-shutdown-20250513>.
- Plantinga, Alvin. 1987. "Justification and Theism." *Faith and Philosophy* 4 (4): 403–26. <https://place.asburyseminary.edu/faithandphilosophy/vol4/iss4/3>.
- Polanco, Héctor Díaz. 1997. *Indigenous Peoples in Latin America: The Quest for Self-Determination*. Routledge.
- Ravecca, Paulo, Marcela Schenck, Bruno Fonseca, and Diego Forteza. 2024. "What Are They Doing Right? Tweeting Right-Wing Intersectionality in Latin America." In *Pink Tides, Right Turns in Latin America*, edited by Charmain Levy and Manuel Larrabure. Routledge.
- Rice, Doug, Jesse Rhodes, Tatishe Nteta, and Adam Eichen. 2025. "New Research Shows the American Public Continues to Support Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Policies." *The London School of Economics and Political Science*, June 4. <https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/usappblog/2025/06/04/new-research-shows-the-american-public-continues-to-support-diversity-equity-and-inclusion-policies/>.
- Rogan, Bjarne, and Stephen Brown. 2005. "An Entangled Object: The Picture Postcard as Souvenir and Collectible, Exchange and Ritual Communication." *Cultural Analysis* 4: 1–28. [http://ist-socrates.berkeley.edu/~caforum/volume4/pdf/rogan\\_72ppi.pdf](http://ist-socrates.berkeley.edu/~caforum/volume4/pdf/rogan_72ppi.pdf).
- Roth, Julia. 2020. "Intersectionality Strikes Back: Right-Wing Patterns of En-Gendering and Feminist Contestations in the Americas." In *Right-Wing Populism and Gender: European Perspectives and Beyond*, edited by Gabriele Dietze and Julia Roth, 251–72. <https://doi.org/10.1515/9783839449806-014>.
- Rufo, Christopher F., Ilya Shapiro, and Matt Beienburg. 2023. "Abolish DEI Bureaucracies and Restore Colorblind Equality in Public Universities." Manhattan Institute, January 18. <https://manhattan.institute/article/abolish-dei-bureaucracies-and-restore-colorblind-equality-in-public-universities>.
- Sentner, Irie, and Ben Johansen. 2025. "Trump Floats Stripping Networks Critical of Him of Their Broadcast Licenses." *Politico*, September 18. <https://www.politico.com/news/2025/09/18/trump-floats-stripping-networks-critical-of-him-of-their-broadcast-licenses-00571953>.

- Serwer, Adam. 2019. "The Fight over the 1619 Project Is Not About the Facts." *The Atlantic*, December 23. <https://www.theatlantic.com/ideas/archive/2019/12/historians-clash-1619-project/604093/>.
- Shockey, Kyle. 2016. "Intellectual Freedom Is Not Social Justice: The Symbolic Capital of Intellectual Freedom in ALA Accreditation and LIS Curricula." *Progressive Librarian* 44 (Spring): 101–10. <http://www.progressivelibrariansguild.org/PL/PL44/101.pdf>.
- Suk Gersen, Jeannie. 2022. "A Year of Dominance and Defiance at the Supreme Court." *The New Yorker*, December 26. <https://www.newyorker.com/culture/2022-in-review/a-year-of-dominance-and-defiance-at-the-supreme-court>.
- Wheeler, Russell. 2020. "McConnell's Fabricated History to Justify a 2020 Supreme Court Vote." The Brookings Institution, September 24. <https://www.brookings.edu/articles/mcconnells-fabricated-history-to-justify-a-2020-supreme-court-vote/>.
- Wikipedia. 2025. "Politics." Last modified November 10, 2025. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Politics>.
- Williams, Joan C. 2017. *White Working Class: Overcoming Class Cluelessness in America*. HBR Press.
- Williams, Joan C. 2025. *Outclassed: How the Left Lost the Working Class and How to Win Them Back*. St. Martin's Press.
- Williams, Juan. 2013. *Eyes on the Prize: America's Civil Rights Year, 1954–1965*. 30th anniversary ed. Penguin Books.
- Winberry, Joseph. 2023. "'People Have Died to Get Us to Where We Are': Combating Aging Services Information Marginalization Alongside LGBTQ+ Older Adults." Doctoral diss., University of Tennessee-Knoxville.
- Winberry, Joseph. 2025. "Aging-Related Information Needs and Barriers Experienced by LGBTQ+ Older Adults." *Libri* 75 (1): 67–80. <https://doi.org/10.1515/libri-2023-0119>.
- Winberry, Joseph, and Bradley Wade Bishop. 2021. "Documenting Social Justice in Library and Information Science Research: A Literature Review." *Journal of Documentation* 77 (3): 743–54. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JD-08-2020-0136>.
- Winberry, Joseph, and LaVerne Gray. 2022. "From 'Mesearch' to 'Wesearch': The Role of Community in Developing Identity-Centric Research." *Proceedings of the ALISE Annual Conference*. <https://doi.org/10.21900/j.alise.2022.1033>.
- Winberry, Joseph, and Tara O'Donnell. Forthcoming. "Advocating Against Book Bans in Public Libraries: A Role for Friends of the Library Volunteers?" *The Library Quarterly*.
- Winberry, Joseph, Griffin Powell, and Tara O'Donnell. 2025. "Older Adult Perspectives on Public Librarian Education in an Aging Society: Early Findings." *Proceedings of the ALISE Annual Conference*. <https://doi.org/10.21900/j.alise.2025.2078>.
- Wolfe, Jan. 2025. "What to Know About the Legal Battles over Redistricting in Texas and California." *Reuters*, August 22. <https://www.reuters.com/legal/government/what-know-about-legal-battles-over-redistricting-texas-california-2025-08-22/>.
- Yilek, Caitlin, and Joe Walsh. 2025. "Democrats Sweep Key Races in 2025 Elections in Early Referendum on Trump." *CBS News*, November 5. <https://www.cbsnews.com/live-updates/election-day-2025-voting-results/>.

## Author

Joseph Winberry, Ph.D. is an assistant professor in the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill's School of Information and Library Science. A self-described "Critical iGerontologist", much of his

research is at the intersection of library and information science, older adults, and social justice. Prior to obtaining his masters and Ph.D. in Information Sciences from the University of Tennessee at Knoxville, Dr. Winberry worked in non-profits including the Knox County, TN Office on Aging where he originated their elder abuse response program.