How we recruit academic librarians:

Rethinking hiring practices and policies to support the development of a more diverse and inclusive workforce

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- **Context**
- **Research study overview**
- **Findings**
- **A few thoughts**
- **Q&A**

Agenda

Diversity and inclusion have long been recognized as core values in academic librarianship (ACRL, n.d.; CAPAL, 2020), yet the profession continues to lack in diversity.

Context

	2015 8Rs Redux: CARL Libraries human resources study (2013 / 2014 data)	2018 CAPAL Census of academic librarians (2018 data)
Female	69%	74%
White	89%	90%
Indigenous	1%	2%
Disabled	1%	8%

Researcher Positionality

My privilege and identity have shaped my understanding of this research topic, and have influenced how I have approached the research process, the data I have collected, and how I have analyzed this data.

Research questions

1. Are there hiring policies and practices that have the potential to support the development of a more diverse and inclusive librarian workforce?

2. Are there others that might pose barriers to achieving this goal?

Inclusion / Exclusion Criteria

29 CARL Institutions — LAC and NRC were excluded

Librarian Recruitments — Past 2 years

Junior / Mid Level — Senior and executive levels were excluded

Study Scope

Talent Pool "Pipeline"   **Recruitment**   **Hiring**   Retention

Limitations

In addition to limitations of scope (i.e. only 29 CARL institutions considered; last 2 years; junior / intermediate level only; recruitment and hiring only):

1. Missing voices: Did not speak with candidates who were hired, applied and were not hired, or who read the posting but did not apply

2. Lack of diversity data: No access to data about the candidate pool or about successful candidates

Methods & Methodology

- Mixed methods study

- Grounded theory approach

- 3 phases

Phase 1

- Interviews with HR professionals / "persons who support librarian recruitments"
- 11 participants
- 11 institutions
- French or English
- 46 questions

Phase 2

- Interviews with search committee chairs
- 14 participants
- 7 institutions
- 49 questions

Phase 3

- Content analysis of 172 job postings
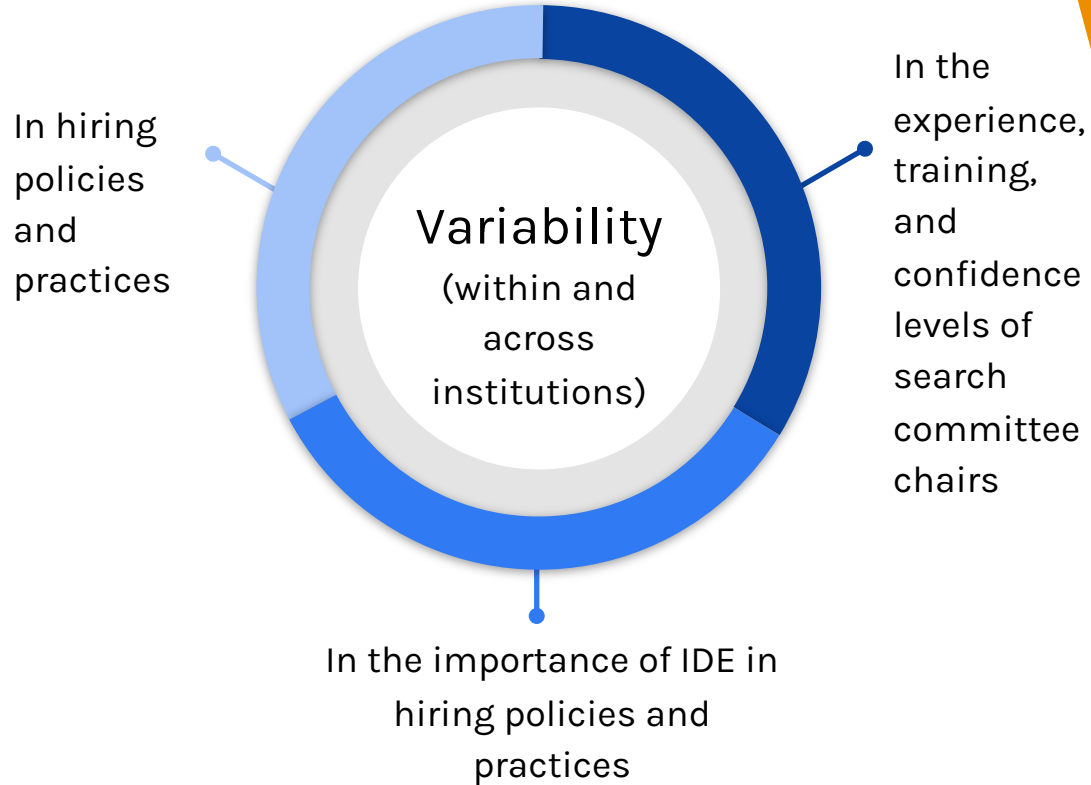- Closing date between May 1, 2018 and April 30, 2020

HR professionals / "persons who support librarian recruitments"

- HR Advisor / Consultant / Officer
- Head / Director / Manager of HR
- Library Administrator
- Associate University Librarian
- Chief / Head / University Librarian / Dean of Libraries

Broad themes and current practices

Findings

Broad Themes

Variability (within and across institutions)

In hiring policies and practices

In the experience, training, and confidence levels of search committee chairs

In the importance of IDE in hiring policies and practices

Broad Themes

Desire to "do better" in terms of IDE in recruitment

Differences in how HR professionals and librarians conceptualize diversity in recruitment

Perceived lack of diversity in the candidate pool

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Access to data

Conceptualizing diversity

HR Professionals

Language of the Employment Equity Act (S.C. 1995, c.44) - "persons in designated groups": women, Aboriginal peoples, persons with disabilities and members of visible minorities"

Librarians

Generally had a more broad interpretation
"a broad range of human differences, including but not limited to ethnicity, race, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, socioeconomic position, ability, age, religion, and national origin" (SFU Library, 2019)

Perceived lack of diversity in the "pool"

"I think the biggest challenge, actually, is the pool of applicants. [...] My understanding is that this is a well-known issue within the field. [...] Diversity within librarianship is not that great. I don't think it's anybody's fault - it's just who's coming through the system. So when we have a pool [...] it's generally [...] Caucasian and female"

Q. Is diversity data collected about applicants?

A. "I don't know. I have never asked. So I really don't know."

Q. "OK. I'm going to ask a follow-up question to something you said earlier [...] You mentioned that the overwhelming majority of your applicants are white and female" [...] So...how do you know?"

A. "Best guess, and... I'm not sure this is legal [...] but I do Google people - I do try to select for a more diverse candidate pool."

Diversity Data

1. Is diversity data collected?

2. Is it optional for candidates to provide this data?

3. Who has access to the data?

4. Is diversity data reported about the selected candidate(s)?
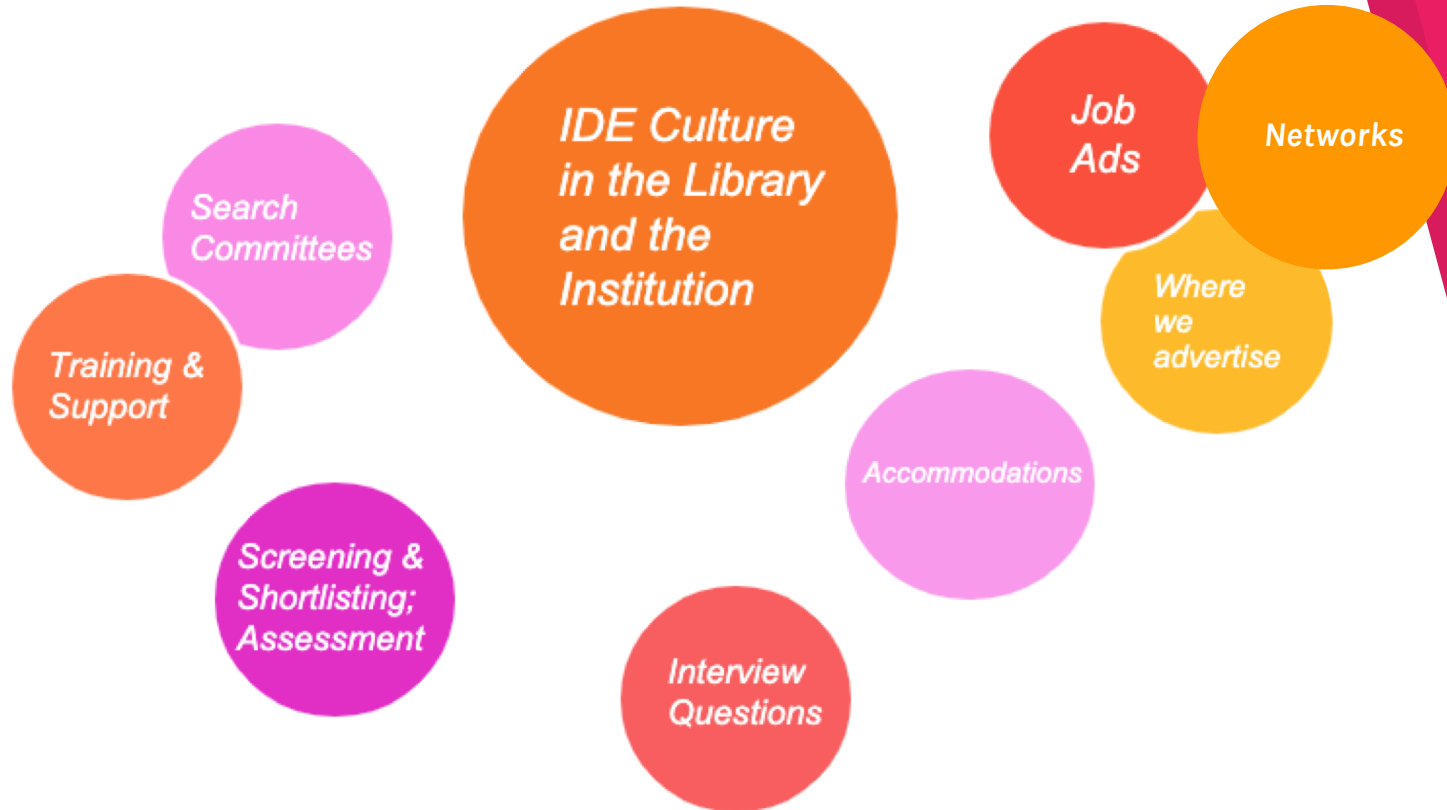
Research questions

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Current practices, not best practices

Research participants were universal in their unwillingness to describe their current IDE hiring practices as "best practices" - even at institutions where extensive guidelines had already been developed. Participants shared that there was more work to be done and that guidelines and practices would continue to evolve and improve over time.

No simple answers, no easy checklist

Search Committees

Training & Support

IDE Culture in the Library and the Institution

Screening & Shortlisting; Assessment

Interview Questions

Accommodations

Job Ads

Networks

Where we advertise

IDE Culture in the Library and Institution

Does your organization / library / administration value diversity? Is IDE a priority?

- Expect that everyone engage in IDE work and learning
- Work to identify systemic issues
- Include IDE in your strategic plan and departmental goals
- Allocate resources (time, money, staff) for IDE initiatives
- Support affinity groups
- Offer IDE training and PD opportunities
- Signal that IDE is a priority in your virtual and physical spaces

Search Committees

How are Search Committee Chairs and members of search committees selected?

If possible:
- Avoid always including the same people on all of the hiring committees. Different people have different perspectives and will hopefully produce different outcomes.
- Ensure diverse representation on the committee. Be mindful to not place undue labour on certain people (e.g. the only Indigenous librarian in your institution)
- Designate a equity representative who will bring an IDE lens to the process.

Training and support

Is IDE training and support offered for Search Committee Chairs and other members of the search committee?

- Make training mandatory
- Offer training regularly
- Offer refresher trainer - one unconscious bias session is not enough!
- Provide opportunities for new Chairs to learn from more experienced chairs (e.g. participate in a Search Committee led by a Chair; provide mentoring opportunities; etc.)
- Ensure Search Committee Chairs are aware of the supports available to them through HR, Equity Offices, etc.

Job Ads

Does IDE feel like it's just an afterthought?

- If IDE is a value, don't rely solely on an institutional IDE statement. IDE skills and qualifications should be requirements.
- Ensure IDE skills and qualifications don't feel like they've been tacked on at the end of a lengthy list ("oh yeah, and…")
- Avoid long laundry lists of required skills and qualifications. Consider whether these are bona fide requirements or whether training could be provided.
- Avoid unnecessary jargon
- Avoid language that may come across as ageist, gendered, etc. (e.g. energetic, driven, "rock star", etc.)

Advertise, network, and recruit

Are you actively networking and reaching out and recruiting, or passively waiting for people to apply?

- Cast a very wide net. Go beyond your institutional website and iSchool jobsites. Reach out via ViMLoC, We Here job board, listservs, affinity groups, personal networks, etc.
- Make time to build relationships and network

Accommodations

At which point(s) in the hiring process do you offer accommodations? What types of accommodations do you offer?

- Offer accommodations throughout the hiring process: in the job ad, on your website, when you reach out to candidates to invite them for an interview, and during the interview.
- Accommodations are about removing barriers to ensure that all candidates are successful. This means making the process accessible in the broadest possible sense. In addition to accessibility for people who are differently abled, remember to consider things like dietary restrictions, breaks for prayer or breast feeding, etc.

Screening & shortlisting

How do you ensure consistency when shortlisting applicants and scoring candidate responses?

- Involve committee members in developing interview questions, rubrics / scoring sheets before reviewing applications.
- Ensure all committee members are on the same page about what the key aspects of the role entail.
- Encourage open and frank conversations about what answers that are *above*, *at*, and *below* expectations might include.
- Ask committee members to score independently.
- Take turns speaking first when sharing thoughts about candidates / candidate responses
- Ensure the Chair always speaks last (to avoid undue influence)

Interview questions

- Develop interview questions and scoring sheets at the same time, and before seeing any of the applications.
- Ensure questions relate directly to the required skills and qualifications for the position.
- Ask all of the candidates the same questions. Be consistent in the use of prompts (i.e. either include them or don't).
- Avoid using unnecessary jargon.
- Consider giving candidates one or more questions ahead of time and / or a print copy of the questions when interviewing in person.

Final Thoughts

Make time to very intentionally consider your hiring policies and practices.

"Equity [...] is about interrogating the systems that have been built over hundreds of years, and all of which have been informed by individual and collective bias. As values and the expression of cultural values change, the systems must be unraveled, reviewed, vetted against current understanding and interpretation, and revised—if not overhauled completely."

(Jones, 2020)

"If libraries were the same as faculties, and we were doing our external review, or internal quality process, [they] would basically say, "increase your diversity by 10% or you don't get graduate students anymore." That's what would happen to the math faculty if they were us. We would get a qualified pass at best, or we would get a "do not pass," and we would have to come up with a plan for how we are going to fix this. We would get NO HIRES unless [they were] diversity hires."

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Additional Resources

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Questions?

Credits

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