

**Lecture on Social Responsibility and Diversity in Librarianship**

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**Pre-sixties America:**

**segregation throughout the country, not just in the South, where it was legalized. Even popular music, for example, was segregated, with some of the greatest rock and roll songs having two versions, one for the black community and one for the white community:**

**Hound Dog: Big Mama Thornton/Elvis Presley**

**Pat Boone vs. Little Richard/ . Tutti Frutti**

**Colored only restrooms and water fountains/ white only universities and schools.**

**Even existed here in Tucson. No dogs or Mexicans Allowed, Dunbar School. Elementary schools had 1-C programs for children deemed mentally slow because their first language was not English.**

**barriers to access to education, employment, housing. Dual wage systems. Women and minorities earned less than their Anglo counterparts.**

**Civil Rights movement, the women's movement, the Farmworker movement and the struggles of the various ethnic and racial groups in this country forced a shift in the national consciousness. While it was fine to send our young men of color to war, it wasn't okay to send them to college. People took to the streets in protest and demanded equal opportunity.**

**In response to these pressures, New social programs were created that began to address the need for changes. Johnson's Great Society initiative made federal funding available to address social inequalities. Money was poured into programs that attacked poverty and illiteracy. Federal mandates such as affirmative action were instituted.**

**Late sixties: social responsibility movement in libraries viewed libraries as important and effective instruments of social change. While by and large a white women's profession, even within the profession women earned less and were less well represented in positions of power.**

**Social responsibility in libraries was not about the suppression of access or ideas, but rather the ideal that libraries must work for equality of access for all people, not just say that they do.**

**Libraries, as the only institutions which profess the goal of collecting and disseminating all information (unsuccessful as they may have been) have a responsibility, a social responsibility to facilitate –and even to create—information power for all people. To provide such power, libraries and librarians must not only survive, but participate fully in vital decisions to be made while shaping the future.**

**Founding of Social Responsibilities Roundtable in ALA: It works to make ALA more democratic and to establish progressive priorities not only for the Association, but also for the entire profession. Concern for human and economic rights was an important element in the founding of SRRT and remains an urgent concern today. SRRT believes that libraries and librarians must recognize and help solve social problems and inequities in order to carry out their mandate to work for the common good and bolster democracy.**

**This is in opposition to the notion that libraries ought to be neutral institutions. See Schuman's article on the difference between neutrality and objectivity.**

**Areas where change was needed:**

- **provision of culturally relevant materials that reflect the life experiences of non-Anglos**
- **outreach to populations not previously taken into account – community studies to assess the demographic profile of not only current users, but potential users of libraries.**
- **recruiting people of color into the profession so that the library staff better reflects the broader population.**
- **providing appropriate access points to information; use of terminology that is meaningful, not offensive or demeaning to groups outside the mainstream. The work of Sandy Berman at the Hennepin County Library exemplifies the efforts made to provide inclusive, non-offensive subject headings.**
- **Provision of materials in languages other than English.**
- **Sensitivity to cultural values other than one's own.**

**Since the 70's, within the profession there have been groups organized to address these needs: Examples include: the SRRT, the Feminist Task Force, The Black Caucus of the ALA, REFORMA, APALA/CALA, and the American Indian Library Association.**

**Federal funding began to have an impact on the recruitment of people of color to the profession. This included the funding of the Graduate Library Institute for Spanish Speaking Americans, and other scholarship programs aimed at bringing in more minorities into the profession.**

**The eighties were another matter. The Reagan era saw a backlash in funding and politics. The Contra war was funded, and the Sanctuary movement attacked. Freedom of access to information was challenged. Unions were busted and big business and the wealthy were given break after break . By the mid-80's it was apparent that the country had not made much progress in moving ahead on issues of social equality. This backlash in turn spawned a new movement begun to promote the idea of cultural diversity. Again, the focus in libraries was on recruiting people of color to the profession, making culturally sensitive materials available, and on educating library staff about issues of cultural and ethnic difference. This in turn created another uproar over the issue of political correctness and the notion that asking people to be sensitive was "racism in reverse". Books like *The Closing of the American Mind*, and *Illiberal Education: The politics of race and sex on campus* were published in response to an expansion of the "canon" wars in literature.**

**Since the late 80's the library profession has focused a lot of attention on promoting diversity. Arguments have arisen over the definition of diversity. One extreme is diversity is any difference that makes a difference. This takes into account things like personal style, learning style etc. The other side of the coin argues that we still need to increase representation of people of color in the profession, particularly in positions of leadership.**

**Definitions:**

**How do you define diversity?**

**How do you define multiculturalism?**

**What's the difference between diversity and affirmative action?**