

Diversity Statement//Statement on Contribution to Diversity

My work supports building the academic library of the future as a place for transformative collaboration that values and supports diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility (DEIA). My work encompasses socio-technical (people, policies, communities, and technologies) infrastructure. As such, I seek opportunities to provide leadership to support and uplift individuals as well as to put in place systems and processes for equity. For systems, I look to where digital technology can aid us and where it fails us—to openly discuss problems and find additional solutions. For our work as people, I follow the practices and principles of radical candor and community organizing to call in and not out, to address problems and concerns from a place of true compassion with direct, skillful, and honest communication.

Beginning my academic career as a technologist and a humanist, I recognized the power of systems and organizations to uplift or oppress, and that technology is never neutral. I chose to pursue a career in academic librarianship because I recognized that this would afford the best position and platform for working towards a more just and equitable world. When I began at the Libraries at the University of Florida (UF), I learned of the Digital Library of the Caribbean (dLOC), an international collaborative started in 2004. I began working in the Libraries at UF in 2007, and did not have prior exposure to Caribbean Studies. At that time, dLOC was a dream more than a reality, with complicated technology and uncertain grant funding. In dLOC, I recognized the values I wanted to support—shared governance, mutual aid, generous thinking, procedural justice, and DEIA—and I began working to best support dLOC and to leverage it as a model to explain concepts and ways of working, to enable change across our communities.

In the years since, I served on the leadership team that moved dLOC from grant to permanent funding, and that leveraged dLOC to create opportunities for people within the Libraries, faculty, staff, and student collaborators, and collaborators worldwide. Being part of the dLOC community also changed me. Tangibly: I am now a Caribbean scholar, serve on the UF-wide Cuba Steering Committee, was awarded the Caribbean Information Professional of the Year, and am taking my fifth Spanish class to gain fluency to be a better member and contributor to my community. Intangibly, I now understand the power of community and of trust. I embrace and work following principles and practices of mutual aid, generous thinking, shine theory, appreciative inquiry, and abundance through community, and I work to enable the possibilities that can only be imagined and made real through trusted partnerships.

Speaking at the commencement for doctoral awards at the University of Florida in 2016, National Book Award winner Ibram Kendi asked: “Are You an Intellectual?” He explained that: “No doctorate degree is required to join the intellectual academy. This is an inclusive academy with all types of people with all types of backgrounds;” and that an intellectual is: “someone with a tremendous desire to know. Intellectuals are open-minded. Intellectuals have a tremendous capacity to change their mind on matters, to self-reflect, to self-critique.” I endeavor to be an intellectual and to foster intellectual work through an expansive and capacious worldview. From a feminist lens, I work from my situated perspective and am accountable to my designated communities, recognizing the need to grow and change to best support our full communities.

As with using dLOC as a model, I seek out opportunities to improve policies and processes to best support equity, and to use my experience and position to mentor, sponsor, and uplift others.

In my teaching, research, and work, I seek to cite and recognize diverse voices. I have served as a mentor for students and faculty of color. I share my full grant proposals, with budgets, online so that all involved in the grant understand the scope of work and the costs and benefits to all involved. I regularly serve as a reviewer for publications, grants, and promotions, where I work to ensure we ask and address questions on how we are all best working to create the conditions to support DEIA. I have served on committees within and outside of the Libraries on DEIA and chaired the Search Committee Chair for UF's first Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Librarian.

I am consistently engaged on discussions of accessibility in terms of how technologies can enable access. Much of my work has been on enabling worldwide Open Access, without cost, which hugely improves access. However, it is not enough for much of the world, including rural areas in the US. This is in addition to accessibility concerns of the technologies, for those who do have material access/connectivity. My work has included close collaboration with IT professionals to ensure adherence to minimal computing standards, to push metadata to various systems and best ensure access, even with limited data connectivity. I also developed workflows for offline sharing of files, necessary for many in our communities, as with our partners in Cuba. For this, I have been a leader on the collaborative team to address the many and changing concerns: US compliance requirements for sending hardware and files, metadata and file workflows, strong relationships and communications, and more.

With my work in digital libraries and library publishing, I am engaged on conversations for creating Open Textbooks and Open Educational Resources (OER). In academia, we recognize textbook cost as a huge problem for student learning—which they are; where students have to choose to buy a book or eat, or buy a book or pay rent. But, we less often discuss that rents are too high, students are underpaid and experience wage theft, and other concerns related to student success, costs, and affordability. While working on OER, I also work to address student labor and housing concerns, both within my academic position and by working with various community organizations. In my position, I facilitated creation and am now the Chair of the Smathers Libraries Graduate Internship Program. These funded internships are collaboratively developed and administered by librarians and teaching faculty for graduate students working on projects that support the Libraries and students' academic careers, and are paid at a living wage. This successful program informed the creation of the 2019 launch of a new paid Undergraduate Fellowship Program in DEIA, for which I am one of the leaders.

In all, my work is geared towards enabling a culture of radical collaboration that values and supports DEIA. The most joyous parts of my work are in mentoring and sponsoring others, in growing cultural capacities in our communities, and in putting in place systems, processes, policies, and structures to support DEIA.

Reference

Kendi, Ibram X. "Are You an Intellectual?" *Black Perspectives*, African American Intellectual History Society, Dec. 21, 2016: <https://www.aaihs.org/are-you-an-intellectual/>