

Looking into Mirrors and Windows: School Librarians' Perspectives on Diverse Representation in Book Collections

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ABSTRACT

Librarian professional standards include the development of collections with diverse representation, and the study of multicultural literature is often part of masters programs. However, there is a lack of scholarship examining what multicultural literature signifies for librarians. In addition, the current landscape surrounding libraries has jeopardized students' access to literature, furthering a narrative that attempts to exclude specific identities and portrays librarians as irresponsible and harmful. This study aimed to build a foundation of understanding and critical insights into this problem through a survey distributed to Texas school librarians. Data was analyzed through descriptive statistics and content analysis to understand school librarian perspectives, assess practices, and gain insights to support the presence of multicultural literature. Rudine Sims Bishop's metaphor of books as "mirrors and windows" was a foundation for this study. A theoretical lens informed by Critical Race Theory and Critical Information Literacy and an interpretivist approach were used to guide methods and analysis. Conclusions support a counter-narrative of school libraries related to diverse representation through four themes: librarians center students in practices and decision-making, they believe in the power of books, they compassionately curate the message they are sending students, and they know libraries can continue to improve in service to communities. 142 librarians contributed to the understanding that diverse representation in collections matters. It is recommended these librarians' voices be considered in critically examining policies and develop equitable and just practices that explicitly show that libraries seek to include and affirm the identity and experiences of all students.

ALISE RESEARCH TAXONOMY TOPICS

School libraries; Education; Collections development; Critical librarianship.

AUTHOR KEYWORDS

School libraries; Multicultural literature; Mirrors and windows; Advocacy.

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