

Integrating Critical Race Theory into Library and Information Science: Challenges, Opportunities, and the Path Forward

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ABSTRACT

This panel will explore the intersection of Critical Race Theory and Library and Information Science unveiling the challenges, opportunities, and actionable steps for integrating CRT into library practices, education, and services. Emerging from legal studies in the 1970s, CRT has is considered the key framework for addressing systemic racism and understanding the role of power and race in shaping societal structures. In this session, panelists will discuss how CRT can be used to transform library practices and offer solutions for the evolving challenges faced by libraries and LIS educators.

Panelists will explain how CRT's core ideas can offer new perspectives on issues of access, representation, and equity within libraries helping attendees understand why CRT is crucial in reshaping how libraries address race and how library systems can either perpetuate or challenge racial inequalities. In addition, panelists will examine the tension between the field's traditional commitment to neutrality and CRT's call for activism and social justice unveiling how these competing values can sometimes create friction, especially when it comes to rethinking established practices like collection development, access to resources, and library services. Panelists will engage in a candid conversation centered on the difficulties of shifting these practices in ways that more actively promote racial justice and inclusivity.

Another topic will be the gap in LIS education regarding CRT. Drawing from studies that reveal LIS students often receive little to no exposure to CRT during their graduate programs, the panel will highlight the urgent need for educational reform. Panelists will advocate for curricula that more comprehensively integrate CRT, preparing future librarians to understand and confront issues of racial power dynamics and inequities in their professional work. They will discuss the ways in which a CRT-infused education can equip future library leaders with the tools they need to challenge and dismantle systemic racism in their practices.

Panelists will offer practical ways that CRT can be applied in libraries and real-world examples of how library services and collections can be reimagined through the lens of CRT. Noting the importance of diversifying collections, ensuring that libraries offer equitable access to resources, and creating inclusive spaces where all community members feel represented and heard. By focusing on action-oriented solutions to illustrate how libraries can move beyond theory and engage in concrete efforts to address racial inequities. A key theme of the panel will be the role of librarians as agents of social change.

Finally, the panel will look ahead to the future of CRT in LIS with strategies for ensuring that CRT principles continue to be integrated into LIS practices and education in the long term. This will include ideas for advocating for policy changes within libraries, promoting diversity and inclusion within LIS education, and fostering an ongoing commitment to racial justice in library services and operations. Panelists will leave attendees with actionable steps they can take to incorporate CRT into their own professional practices and educational settings.

ALISE RESEARCH TAXONOMY TOPICS

Information practices; Education of information professionals; Sociocultural perspectives.

AUTHOR KEYWORDS

Critical race theory; Racism in libraries; Inclusive librarianship; Library education.

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