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**Book Review**

## **Review of *Toward Inclusive Academic Librarian Hiring Practices***

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### **ABSTRACT**

Review of *Toward Inclusive Academic Librarian Hiring Practices*, edited by Kathryn Houk, Jordan Nielsen, and Jenny Wong-Welch. Association of College and Research Libraries, 2024. 346 pp. ISBN 9798892555302.

### **KEYWORDS**

Employment, Hiring, Inclusion, Interviewing

### **SUGGESTED CITATION**

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Hiring practices are an oft-discussed issue in academic libraries, and in recent years, the inclusivity of these hiring practices has been at the forefront of that discussion. This volume, edited by three librarians who have been involved in academic library hiring in addition to their own job searches, aims to be a comprehensive guide for librarians who are involved in hiring in academic libraries and who wish to work towards ensuring the inclusivity of that process. The editors contend that academic hiring practices do not always align with the claim of academic libraries writ large that they are an inclusive space for all. The book consists of nineteen chapters written by librarians employed at a wide variety of academic institutions across the United States and Canada and is divided into three sections, plus a foreword and afterword. Throughout the volume, the editors and authors demonstrate the impact of inclusive hiring on both the candidates and the hiring institutions themselves.

Part 1, “Training for Search Committees and Stakeholders,” pulls back from the searches themselves to offer guidance for the ways in which academic libraries can model inclusivity before any formal hiring processes actually begin. The authors in the section contend that hiring cannot be successful if the institutions and the search committee members are not adequately prepared “to foster an inclusive and equitable process” (p. x). Broadly, this section covers search committee training and focuses on ways in which search committees and library human resources can create equitable processes that set both the search committees and the candidates up for success within the hiring process. As noted in Chapter 1, it is just as important for both the academic hiring process to be as inclusive and equitable for the search committee as it is for the candidates (p. 3). Chapter 2 discusses the importance of considering the myriad of individuals that an interviewee might interact with as part of their interview process when considering the inclusivity of the broader search process as well (p. 15-16).

Part 2, “Removing Barriers for Candidates” is perhaps the most useful for search committees in terms of concretely implementing the book’s suggestions in real-world hiring practices, as its six chapters contain concrete advice for ways in which search committees can position themselves as champions for diversity, equity, and inclusion during the hiring process. Chapters in this section focus on transparency with candidates, open communication, the barriers that candidates face when applying for academic library roles, along with suggestions for supporting individuals with disabilities who are going through the hiring process, as well as individuals who are trans or gender diverse.

Chapter 8, “Trans and Gender Diverse Inclusion in Academic Library Hiring,” was written by four trans people working in academic libraries. While it is impossible to quantify how many trans and gender diverse people work in or are applying for jobs in academic

libraries, the authors contend that library support for trans and gender diverse library staff shouldn't end after the hiring process is complete, and that trans library workers "do not automatically know how to incorporate gender inclusion into our work" and "need to learn accordingly" (p. 98) how to incorporate inclusion into their work as well. The authors also contend that this chapter is equally important for cisgender library workers to read and internalize, to create a truly gender-inclusive hiring process across all academic libraries.

Chapter 11, "Planning for the On-Campus Interview: Creating a Descriptive Library Accessibility Guide for Job Candidates" takes a unique approach to the instructive nature of Part 2, and details the creation of an accessibility guide by librarians at The University of North Carolina at Charlotte to support interviewees who may have chronic illnesses or hidden disabilities, as information about physical space navigation is often left out of preparatory materials provided to candidates. Similar guides would be useful for many libraries as they seek to improve the inclusivity of their search processes, and the authors helpfully make the full guide available as an appendix.

Part 3, "Transforming the Process for All" asks readers to consider how library workers can create a truly inclusive search process. During the early days of the COVID-19 pandemic, many libraries were forced to pivot to remote interviews. This naturally made the process more inclusive, and some of these practices have persisted even though many libraries have resumed in-person interviews. Several of the chapters in this section provide overviews of the ways in which various libraries adapted to remote recruitment processes, as well as newer practices that have become more popular in recent years, like making the interview process more transparent overall, or increasing the inclusivity of the onboarding process for newly hired librarians. The overarching themes of Part 3 are particularly evident in several of the chapters. Chapter 12 discusses how hiring has remained a primarily remote operation at the University of British Columbia's Okanagan campus and includes several useful figures, tables, and appendices that those at other institutions can use to make their own remote hiring practices more inclusive. Chapter 13 follows in a similar fashion, following Wake Forest University's journey through pandemic-era hiring processes. Other chapters focus on ways in which the process can be made more transparent to applicants, as well as searches that are run with the stated goal of increasing the diversity of the applicant pool.

While there is some conflicting advice offered throughout the book—there are several recommendations both for requiring DEI statements or presentations from applicants and for eliminating them entirely, for example—the multiple perspectives of the librarians who authored and edited this volume will give readers much to consider when it comes to interrogating the

inclusivity of their own institution's hiring practices. The book is successful in its mission to include a range of perspectives in its authorship, and its commitment to inclusivity with the makeup of the authorship of the chapters. Overall, this is an excellent volume that should be required reading for anyone involved in hiring in academic libraries in any capacity and is recommended for all academic libraries.