Chapter 3
Social Justice as It Evolves in the LAM Sector:
A Content Analysis and Avenues for Future Research

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ABSTRACT

This chapter intends to explore the history of social justice in libraries, archives, and museums (LAM) in general and social inclusion in particular. The value of this chapter is in the identified indicators, also known as characteristics (e.g., title words and its relation to citation behavior) in the current literature. A profile of over 500 articles, from 2001 to 2021, is analyzed. Journal articles from 2016 to 2021 are used to test three hypotheses. The findings of this study facilitate in understanding the emerging themes and interdisciplinary areas in the field of social justice.

BACKGROUND

The idea of convergence of LAM's is not very old; it is rather less than two decades old. The same applies to the interest in going out in the community space. "The last two decades have seen concerns for equality, diversity, social justice, and human rights move from the margins of museum thinking and practice to the core" (Sandell & Nightingale, 2012, p. 344). Museums, libraries, and archives are all now getting into activism, outreach, and community spaces (Punzalan & Caswell, 2016; Stauffer, 2021).

This chapter draws insights from the field about the internal and external approaches towards inclusion. Activism (towards inclusion) has been a debatable point in LAM's recent history. External attempts, for example, to reach was on one side: "Only a decade ago, the notion that museums, galleries, and heritage organizations might engage in the activist practice, with explicit intent to act upon inequalities, injustices, and environmental crises, was met with skepticism and often derision" (Hollows, 2019, p.1-8). Internal

attempt to be all-inclusive is an ideal yet to be achieved in collections, in staff's hiring and sustaining, and in many more contexts. "There is a need to evaluate the internal practices within the museum field before social justice can be properly addressed externally" (Filo, 2017).

Facilitating social inclusion, or reducing exclusion, needs to be demystified to bring out the fact that inclusion is a two-sided narrative. On one side is the community (i.e., external or about them), and on the other side is the in-house narrative: a subject that is mostly ignored. The purpose is to trace the common threads in the emergence of the LAM. The questions included are: What are the best practices/case studies for inclusion and engagement? and, what are the best measures to evaluate performance in Civic Engagement (CE) or Social Justice (SJ)?

METHOD

This chapter will review the literature to trace the beginnings of social justice in the information service providing sector – e.g., library, archive, museum, community centers, etc. The questions that matter in this tracing are: what is the relevance of social justice in LAM? how are the practice and training? And what are the future trends? The focus is on equity, diversity, and inclusion. For example, how is equity in hiring and collection development? How is professional education interested and or involved in social empathy?

History of Civic Engagement, Social Justice, Technological and Social Turn in LAM

Going by a LAM's survey conducted in 2018-2019, it is obvious that the evolution that had started in the 19th century is moving forward, in many small and big ways. The LAM's survey shows some clarity in terms of The Technological and Social Turn in Norway, Sweden, Denmark, and Hungary (Audunson, et al., 2020).

How well can one articulate the concept of civic engagement and the role of museums and libraries in the 1880s? It is not just roles to engage the external community, rather it is also to engage internally. G. Brown Goode, Assistant Secretary of the Smithsonian Institution in Charge of the National Museum in "A paper read before the American Historical Association", in Washington DC., December 26-28, 1888, states: "The true significance of the word museum may perhaps be brought to our apprehension by an allusion to the ages which preceded its origin … The history of museum and library run in parallel lines" (p. 497- 498).

Goode adds further details as to what it entails:

I hope that the time will come when every town shall have both its public museum and its public library, each with a staff of competent men, mutually helpful, and contributing largely to the intellectual life of the community. The museums of the future in this democratic land should be adapted to the needs of the mechanic, the factory operator, the day-laborer, the salesman, and the clerk, as much as those of the professional man and the man of the leisure. It is proper that there be laboratories and professional libraries for the development of experts who are to organize, arrange and explain the museums (p. 507).

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