Beyond the Las Vegas Strip: Assessing Archival Diversity at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas

Sarah Jones, Tammi Kim, Emily Lapworth

PROBLEM STATEMENT
In a data-driven institution, how can existing archives data be used to advocate for increased resources focused on diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI)?

METHODOLOGY
Assess existing internal data to determine what proportion of collections and activities are "diverse" - i.e. relate to subjects and communities outside the traditional narrative (white, cisgender, heteronormative, etc.).
- Accessions
- Archival collections
- Digital collections

FINDINGS
Reducing the diversity of human experiences and identities into neat categories is inherently subjective. Subject heading analysis is imperfect, but can provide a rough estimate of collections and digital objects related to specific topics.

Our findings demonstrate the need for:
- Improved training and best practices in applying subject terms
- Description clean up and enhancement
- Prioritizing diverse voices in digitization and collecting
- Sustaining collaborations and relationships beyond grant funded projects
- Holistically incorporating DEI values into all work

ACCESSIONS RECORDS
Out of 1,647 accessions between 1967 to March 2020, 35% (581) are representative of a diverse topic. Diverse collecting was most active during periods of grant funded initiatives.

ARCHIVAL COLLECTIONS
Out of 17,458 archival collections, 17% (2,902) are linked to at least one diverse subject heading. 66% of these collections are oral histories.

DIGITAL COLLECTIONS
28% (17,069) of digital collections records with subject headings include at least one subject heading categorized as diverse.

NEXT STEPS
- Present overall findings of internal audit to colleagues in UNLV SCA to start critically analyzing our practices and policies.
- Collaborate with curators to identify collections that may benefit from enhanced metadata, re-description, or digitization.
- Write up results and analysis of audit for a peer-reviewed publication.

Read more about the project at https://tinyurl.com/unlv2021RFhandout