

# **ARLIS/SE Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Task Force Report**

## **Summer/Fall 2020**

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## **Introduction and Purpose**

At the Art Libraries Society of North America - Southeast Chapter (ARLIS/SE) fall 2019 business meeting in Tallahassee, Florida, one item of new business was an interest in pursuing Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion (DEI) work at the regional level. While this proposal was well-received by the chapter membership, with the outbreak of COVID-19 no further work began until the subsequent spring chapter business meeting, held virtually on April 21, 2020. Once again, as a matter of new business, ARLIS/SE President Leah Sherman formally proposed creating the ARLIS/SE DEI Task Force. She noted that the Southeast Chapter is one of the largest ARLIS/NA regions geographically, and that DEI work would need to be locally suited to SE Chapter members in a way that might complement or augment the efforts of the existing ARLIS/NA Diversity Committee. Given that the ARLIS/SE Chapter had never systematically undertaken DEI efforts at the chapter level, she acknowledged the priority of restarting the conversation and suggested a task force of volunteers should spend the summer scanning the Society at the North American and Southeast regional levels for current Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion practices, with an eye toward opportunities for future efforts within the local region. A call for volunteers was sent out to the ARLIS/SE listserv and six other Southeast Chapter members were chosen to form the ARLIS/SE DEI Task Force.

This report documents the work undertaken by the ARLIS/SE DEI Task Force during the summer and early fall of 2020. The following components are included: background on the Task Force membership, the charge and deliverables of the group, recommendations offered by the Task Force, a summary of the Task Force's scope, environmental scan, surveying methods, and findings, and suggested Next Steps for the Southeast Chapter.

## **Task Force Membership**

Chaun Campos (she/her/hers)

*Student, Valdosta State University*

Breanne Crumpton, ARLIS/SE Past President (she/her/hers)

*Information Literacy Librarian for Humanities, Appalachian State University*

Karyn Hinkle (she/her/hers)

*Visual & Performing Arts Librarian, University of Kentucky*

Marty Miller

*Art and Design Librarian, Louisiana State University*

Lindsey Reynolds, ARLIS/SE Vice President (she/her/hers)

*Dodd Librarian, University of Georgia*

Eva Scippa

*First Year Engagement Librarian, UNC Wilmington*

Leah Sherman, Chair, ARLIS/SE President (she/her/hers)

*Visual & Performing Arts Librarian, Florida State University*

## **Task Force Members' DEI Experience**

Notably, all of the volunteers on the ARLIS/SE DEI Task Force had previous professional experience with DEI service. This experience, in addition to members' personal knowledge and opinions, was leveraged throughout the Task Force's work over the summer. The members of this group fully acknowledge that anti-racism and inclusion of previously marginalized groups requires constant and ongoing work on the part of those with more societal power and privilege. While personal and professional experiences are beneficial to the conversation overall, no one person is all-knowing or fully-developed. Both as individuals and as a chapter, there is so much more work to do.

- *Chaun Campos* has served on multiple Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) committees in order to better address the exclusion of persons with disabilities from consideration in efforts to be inclusive of all people in the library and information science field. She has served as a member of Emory University's Libraries and Information Technology DEI committee, the editor and social media liaison of the Georgia Library Association's Library Services for Persons with Disabilities Interest Group, and a Co-Chair of the Georgia Library Association's Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Task Force.
- *Breanne Crumpton* is currently the co-chair of the Belk Library Diversity & Inclusion committee at Appalachian State University. The committee is working on ways to highlight the diversity and inclusive work taking place around the library as well as establish the library as a welcoming and inclusive environment among wider campus diversity concerns.
- *Karyn Hinkle* has served several terms on the University of Kentucky Libraries' Equity, Diversity + Inclusivity Committee, where she created and edited the Libraries' quarterly "Social Justice Links" newsletter, and has helped mentor and learn from 7 (and counting!) of the Libraries' Undergraduate Diversity Scholar Interns. During the 2018-2019 academic year, she joined a university-wide faculty learning community, Teaching for Equity, that studied and presented ways to make classroom teaching and learning more equitable.
- *Marty Miller* is currently a member of LSU Libraries' Diversity Committee, where she worked with committee members on various projects, including the subcommittee on collection development and LGBTQ sources. She also headed the Harlem Renaissance Centennial project which included a display of images from both Louisiana and Harlem in the 1920s and 1930s, a film event featuring commentary from two notable African-American and History studies faculty members and a musical performance, highlighting interpretations of Harlem Renaissance musicians and poets.
- *Lindsey Reynolds* is currently the chair of the Lamar Dodd School of Art's Solidarity and Justice Task Force, where she works with colleagues and, importantly, students to identify a list of demands to address white supremacy and systemic racism within the School and the University at large.
- *Eva Sclippa* is currently the co-chair of the Randall Library Diversity Committee at UNC Wilmington, where she works with her colleagues to make the library more inclusive, to educate their coworkers, and to engage in outreach with the

university and wider community. In her previous position at Alfred University she completed the Curriculum Transformation Program, a weeklong intensive program that walked faculty and staff through breaking down their own implicit biases and understanding larger cultural issues relating to vulnerable populations.

- *Leah Sherman* served on the ARLIS/NA Diversity Committee from 2016-2018. During her time on the Committee she helped to plan and host Diversity Forums at the annual ARLIS/NA conferences in New Orleans and New York City, which included themes on recognizing and combating implicit bias and using open dialogue to create a more inclusive and diverse ARLIS/NA. She was also involved in the creation of the ARLIS/NA Code of Conduct in 2018.

### **Charge and Deliverables**

The Task Force was charged with producing three deliverables by fall 2020:

1. To survey DEI efforts within the ARLIS/SE Chapter as well as all other regional chapters within the Society and to write a report summarizing these findings.
2. To create a list of recommendations for future ARLIS/SE DEI efforts, based upon above findings and discussion within the DEI Task Force.
3. To share the resulting report and recommendations with the ARLIS/SE Chapter membership via the Chapter listserv and to further discuss these two products at the annual fall chapter business meeting in October 2020.

### **Recommendations**

With the acknowledgement that DEI work is never done but with a strong desire to begin these efforts as soon as possible, the Task Force decided the most strategic approach to initiating the proposed recommendations with the Southeast region would be to categorize them into short term initiatives and long term (or ongoing) initiatives:

#### *Short term initiatives*

- Initiating collaboration with ARLIS/SE Webmaster on new website content.
  - To include a Black Lives Matter statement and a new page with information on this Task Force's work, report, and recommendations.
  - Public emphasis on the belief that this work is everyone's responsibility, not just those formally part of any DEI Committee, SE Exec Board, etc.
- Forming a standing Committee or Advisory Board to manage future initiatives.
  - A new standing committee of volunteers, or perhaps an advisory board composed of representatives from existing service roles (such as SE Vice President for the Conference Planning Committee, the Chair of Mentoring, etc.); possibly an ad hoc workflow to recruit members for term-based projects such as this Task Force.

- Regardless of the form, this group should be written into our Chapter Bylaws and will give a report at both the NA and SE annual meetings.

### *Long term initiatives*

- Incorporating land acknowledgements into biannual business meetings.
  - Specific to the location of the annual NA Conference and SE Conference.
  - Begin this initiative with offering a land acknowledgment at the outset of the 2020 ARLIS/SE Virtual Conference, which was originally planned to be held in person in Athens, GA.
- Continue collaborating with ARLIS/SE Webmaster to add new content to the Chapter website and to address current accessibility issues.
  - New content could include Chapter values (not yet written), and web presence for the newly-formed SE DEI Committee/Advisory Board.
  - Address accessibility issues such as adding links with descriptive text rather than urls, alternative image captions, color contrast, re-evaluating text size/font choice, and adding closed captioning to uploaded media.
- Developing scholarships for underrepresented people in the profession.
  - This could be an additional travel award or a new professional development award (for other education activities besides travel).
- Translating core Southeast Chapter documents into Spanish.
  - This conversation is already ongoing between the ARLIS/NA Executive Board and TX-MX Chapter ahead of the Mexico City Conference in 2022.
- Including DEI programming as standard practice in future Conference Planning.
  - Methods to include a special keynote session, an honorarium for presentation/lightning round speakers identifying as being part of an underrepresented group or who are speaking on DEI topics, and/or future field trips/site visits.
  - Ideally there would be funding available for these speakers, which has not been standard practice thus far within the Southeast Chapter.
- Developing policies that are inherently more inclusive of communities that are underrepresented within the organization.
  - Reconsider how we select conference speakers, SE Chapter leaders, etc.
  - Review and augment our Chapter Bylaws to codify this intent.
- Hosting informal or social events dedicated to DEI topics.
  - Some social ideas: happy hours, coffee chats, or a book club.
  - Consider partnering with other organizations in the SE region who are working on anti-racism and other DEI initiatives.
- Partnering with ARLIS/NA, other chapters, and sections such as ArLiSNAP on future DEI collaborations.
  - Have begun discussing a possible 2021 collaboration with the ARLIS/NA Mid-Atlantic Chapter.

## **Scope and Methods**

### **I. Surveying ARLIS/NA Regional Chapters**

One of the ARLIS/SE DEI Task Force's first actions involved looking at the other ARLIS/NA regional chapter websites and reaching out to their Executive Board members. The main question for this North American scan was "what are individual regional chapters doing to foster DEI initiatives locally?"

The Task Force split the 17 ARLIS/NA chapters amongst themselves; each member surveyed several chapters by reviewing their chapter websites and by contacting their chapter leaders.

Here's an example email sent to the chapter leadership:

*The ARLIS/NA Southeast chapter is looking into how other ARLIS/NA regions are incorporating DE&I into their chapter activities. We're openly seeking anything chapters would like to share about their work in this area, so we are starting with email to the chapter leadership, but please feel free to copy or forward to anyone in the chapter, and to share any type or format of information you'd like.*

*If more directed questions help, some questions we've been considering in the Southeast chapter are: Does your chapter have a formal DEI (or other acronym) committee or workgroup? Do you offer scholarships, workshops, speaker series, or other programs in this area? Would you say your efforts are more formal or grassroots/member-based?*

*Thanks for everything you're doing to support social justice in your chapter and beyond!*

Leah Sherman also posted a similar message on the ARLIS/NA Chapter Leaders' Basecamp site; she received some additional responses from chapters by email:

*Hi all! This summer I am chairing a task force of volunteers from within the SE as we begin conversations about how to initiate Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion programming and service opportunities within our chapter. We have never had this conversation before but are anxious to do this work at the chapter level, so I've called this group together to gather information that will help us determine next steps.*

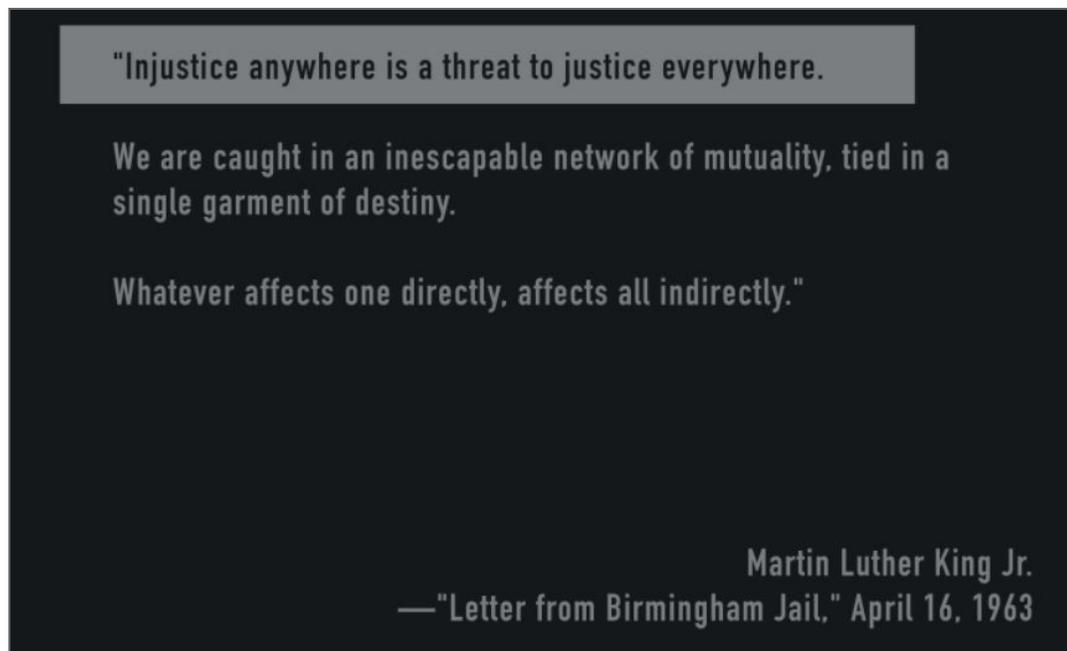
*First, we are undertaking a review of DE&I initiatives at the chapter level to see what all is happening out there, outside of the NA Diversity Committee. Second, we are surveying our own chapter membership to gauge interest and get their thoughts on where/ how they want to see this work unfold. We plan to write a report with recommendations early this fall - I will be circulating the doc to the SE so we can discuss at our virtual business meeting in October, and also to the NA listserv in case anyone else is interested in the outcome of this group.*

*If you're still reading: I would love to know what your chapter does to incorporate DE&I into your regional activities. The Task Force has already reviewed all the chapter websites, but I thought I'd ask here in case there are things we missed! If you have anything to add feel free to post here or email me at [email address].*

Among ARLIS/NA chapter-level DEI initiatives, the Task Force discovered several chapter website updates such as formal statements against racism; DEI topics on the agendas of many past and future chapter meetings; evidence of growing or emerging interest in DEI work in the form of past program topics; and — among every chapter directly corresponded with — a strong interest in hearing this Task Force's findings.

Below are the Task Force's findings from surveying ARLIS/NA chapter websites. They are presented thematically, rather than chapter-by-chapter. Chapter websites are also linked in each individual chapter name:

- *Chapter website updates*
  - The [Montréal-Ottawa-Québec](#) and [New York](#) Chapters updated their websites in response to the summer 2020 Black Lives Matter movement:



*Screenshot from ARLIS/NA MOQ website, August 2020*



*Screenshot from ARLIS/NA New York website, August 2020*

- **Formal statements against racism**
  - The [Montréal-Ottawa-Québec](#) Chapter issued a Black Lives Matter statement: [Les vies des personnes Noires comptent – ARLIS MOQ](#).
  - The [Ontario](#) Chapter issued a statement against anti-Black racism and violence: [ARLIS-ON Statement Against Anti-Black Racism and Violence](#).
  - The [New York](#) Chapter compiled a list of resources supporting Black art, culture, and librarianship: [ARLIS/NA New York Chapter - Support Black Art, Culture, and Librarianship](#).
- **DEI topics on chapter meeting agendas**
  - Many chapters, including [Midstates](#), [New England](#), [Upstate New York](#), and [Southern California](#), included DEI topics in their recent meeting agendas or plan to include the topic in upcoming future meeting agendas.

- The [Northwest](#) Chapter has included a territorial acknowledgment and welcome to the Northwest territory at all Chapter meetings, for which they said they “research, and are careful to appropriately recognize, the host nations of the territories on which we meet.” They recommended [Native-Land.ca | Our home on native land](#) and [Guide to Acknowledging First Peoples & Traditional Territory | CAUT](#) as good resources for researching territorial acknowledgement.
- At their June 2020 meeting, the Twin Cities Chapter invited a BIPOC curator to speak on a local collection of non-western art.
- *Other ideas*
  - The [Ohio Valley](#), [Upstate New York](#), [Southeast](#), and [Northwest](#) chapters each mentioned chapter programming such as exhibition tours, site visits, and conference topics that involve DEI themes.
  - The [New York](#) Chapter is planning a Diversity Forum to be co-hosted by NYARC and held at MoMA, which was to have been scheduled in fall 2020, but has been postponed due to the COVID pandemic.
  - In the June 2020 *ARTifacts* newsletter, the President of the [Southeast](#) Chapter included a statement against racial injustice in her “President’s Column: A Tumultuous and Historic Time.”
  - The [Twin Cities](#) Chapter’s meetings and events are open and free to all so costs don’t prohibit attendance.
  - The [Twin Cities](#) Chapter also hosted a summer book club in August that discussed *A Good Time for the Truth: Race in Minnesota*, a collection of essays by Minnesota BIPOC authors. During their discussion, attendees brainstormed actionable DEI items for their chapter including: advocating for paid internships, cultivating collaborations with BIPOC curators, and creating a resource list. Chapter leaders plan to continue this brainstorming conversation at their fall business meeting.
  - Several chapters reported that they did not consider themselves as having done much formal work yet on DEI initiatives but noted some recent programming themes.
  - There were multiple references to ARLIS/NA as a whole also welcoming DEI work at the Society-level within the [ARLIS/NA Diversity Committee](#).
- *Reception*
  - Every chapter representative who responded directly with a member of the ARLIS/SE DEI Task Force expressed a great interest in the ideas of other chapters, a desire to hear about the outcome of this project within the Southeast chapter, and an eagerness to do more to promote diversity, equity, and inclusion among their own regional memberships.

## II. Surveying the ARLIS/SE Chapter Membership

The next phase was a survey of the ARLIS/SE Chapter to assess interests, comments, and concerns within the Southeast membership about future DEI initiatives. The survey content was a joint effort by the Task Force members, but Marty Miller built and hosted the survey itself through Louisiana State University's LibWizard account.

The survey questions were written based on what the Task Force learned from scanning the other ARLIS/NA chapters, as well as their prior DEI committee experiences. The survey was circulated only to the ARLIS/SE listserv. Respondents were given three weeks to take the survey, including a one week extension.

A total of 16 people responded anonymously, except where identifying information was requested and voluntarily entered.

The survey consisted of six questions, some of which allowed for multiple answers or provided comment fields. Respondents were able to remain anonymous unless they voluntarily shared their name and contact information in Question #2.

Below are the survey questions with figures illustrating responses:

### 1. **How do you think the SE chapter should approach DEI initiatives? Answer choices:**

- By instituting a formal DEI committee
- By working on one-off DEI initiatives as a chapter
- Both approaches should be utilized
- Other
- If you selected "Other," please explain here.

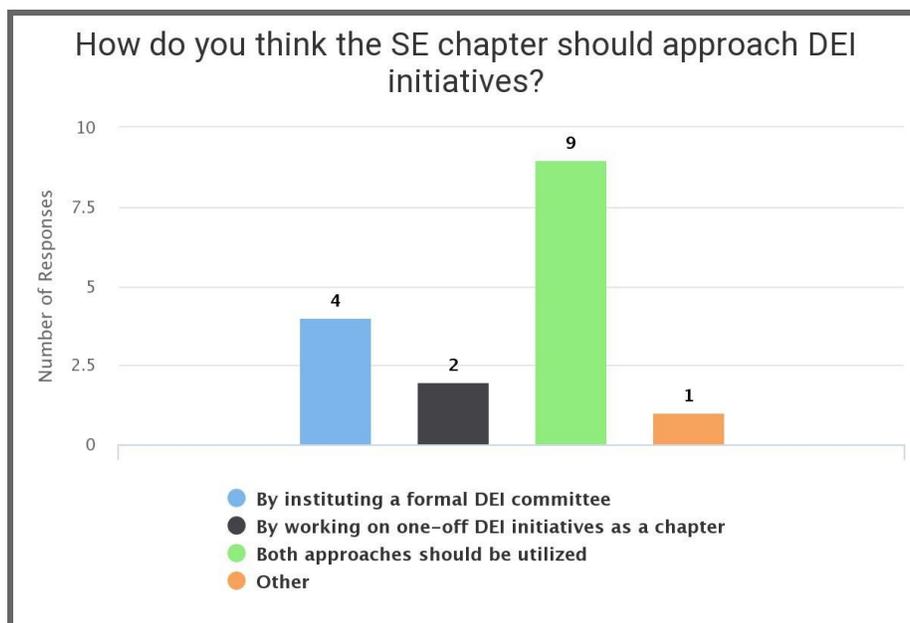


Figure 1. Responses to Question #1

For Question #1, under the “Other” option there was one response:

- “Another option would be to create a task force to immediately address concerns that could then be folded into chapter initiatives.”

An additional suggestion was made in Other response field although the commenter did not choose the Other option:

- “Might consider a task force instead of standing committee. Wouldn’t need any change to bylaws and possibly better functioning with specific charge.”

**2. Would you be willing to serve on a committee or as part of a project-based initiative task force?**

- Yes
- No
- Maybe, if time allows
- If you are willing to serve on a committee or project-based initiative, and are willing to share your contact information with this task force, please enter it here.

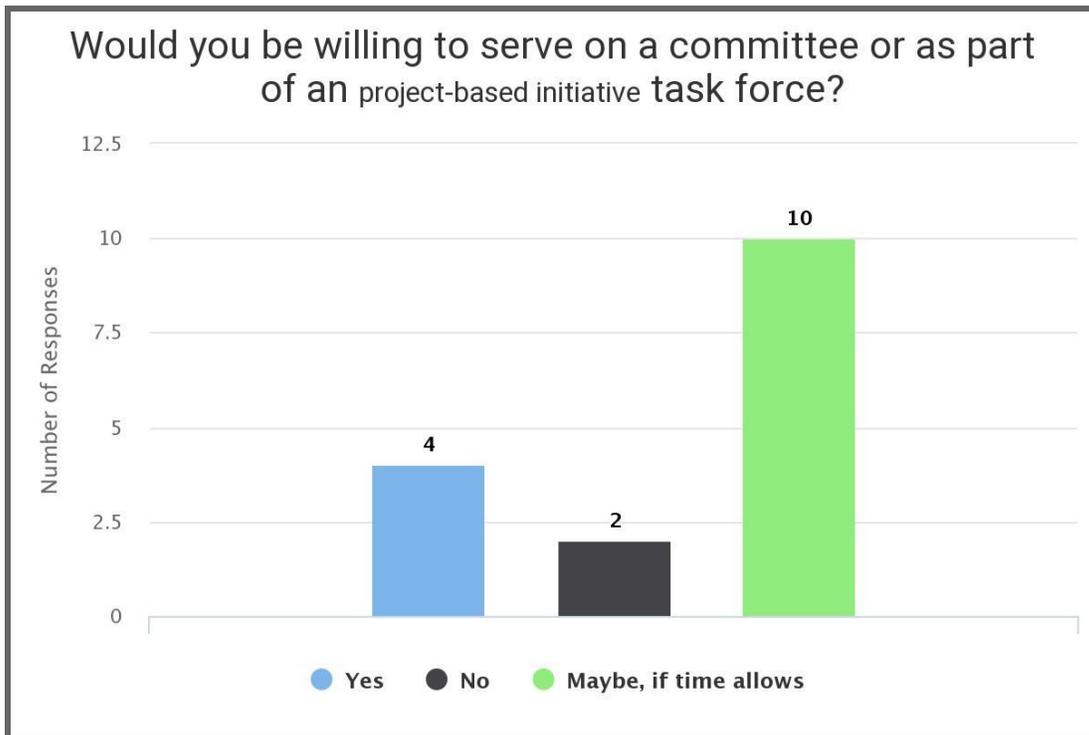


Figure 2. Responses to Question #2

3. Below is a list of potential engagement opportunities. Please rank them by order of importance/preference, from 1 (highest importance) to 10 (lowest importance).

See Figure 3 for the complete list of opportunities; the top five were ranked as:

1. Offering scholarships for underrepresented people in the profession
2. Creating/sponsoring programs for chapter members to attend on DEI themes
3. Add values statement to the Chapter website
4. Writing a BLM statement for our chapter website
5. Revising the ARLIS/NA Southeast Chapter website to address accessibility issues

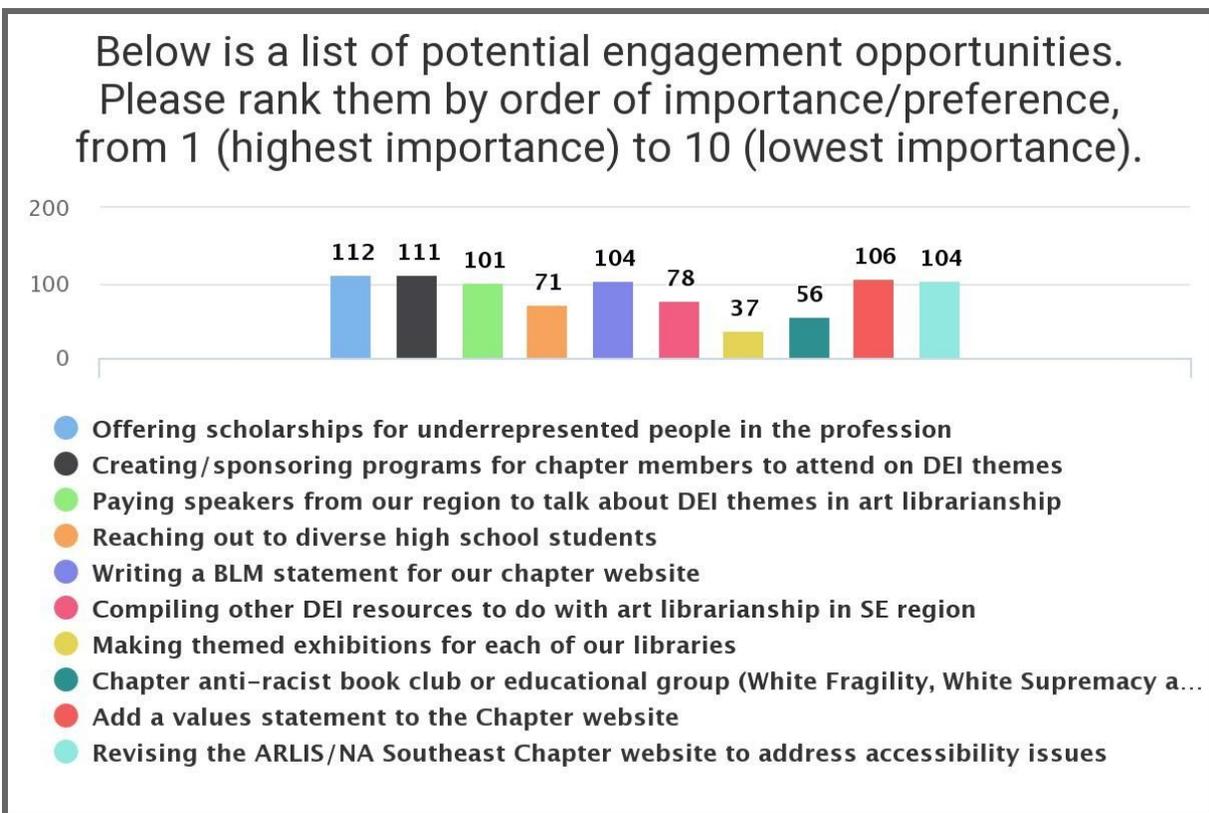


Figure 3. Responses to Question #3

4. Are there additional projects, activities or issues that you would like to see addressed by a DEI committee or working group? [open ended question]
- “Work with other library or arts groups in the region to collaborate on anti-racist projects.”
  - “Outreach to library schools in the SE.”
  - “We could incorporate a land acknowledgement when we meet in person at future conferences.”

**5. What are your primary DEI concerns related to art librarianship? [open ended question]**

- “Lack of equal treatment and representation around issues of race, immigration, LGBTQIA\*, feminism, disability, prison, poverty, and category-spanning intersectional issues.”
- “The lack of representation of historically marginalized people.”
- “Primary concerns for the field is that barrier to entry is high with minimum opportunities.”
- “Employment & promotion opportunities, dealing with institutional bias, as well as collection development, and donor relations.”
- “The lack of diversity among librarians in art librarianship and issues of retention among librarians of color.”
- “I'd like to see more diversity in our field. I also wish we could do more for students who want to become Arts Librarians.”
- “I am concerned that, unless we recruit a diverse membership, DE&I initiatives will be somewhat meaningless. (i.e. While it is important for white people to educate themselves, real change will only come if BIPOC have a place at the table, especially in leadership roles).”
- “Actual increased representation of marginalized groups in our profession.”

**6. Is there anything else that you would like to share? Please type it in the box below.**

- “Thanks for doing this!”
- “I feel that, as an art librarian, any initiatives I take up will ultimately be overridden/impacted by those above me (i.e. decisions made by administration/leadership that prevent any real change from happening, say in hiring practices). How can I manage up to affect positive (and long overdue) change?”
- “Let's include disability in our diversity initiatives.”

## **Next Steps for the Southeast Chapter**

The contents of this report and the Task Force's recommendations will be circulated to the ARLIS/NA and ARLIS/SE listservs in late September 2020. The report and recommendations will also be presented by members of the Task Force at a special virtual town hall on October 15th, 2020 as a part of this year's ARLIS/SE annual conference. Finally, an item of new business at the 2020 ARLIS/SE annual fall business meeting, also on October 15th, will be reviewing and voting on the presented next steps to begin these proposed DEI efforts as soon as possible.

The ARLIS/SE DEI Task Force selected the following goals from the above *short term recommendations* as being of highest priority, and advises that they should be completed by the end of 2020 if at all possible:

- Updating the ARLIS/SE Chapter website to address DEI concerns and initiatives.
- Hosting a virtual town hall about the DEI Task Force's report and recommendations as part of the Chapter's virtual fall conference in October.
- Creating a formal structure for implementing future DEI initiatives, such as a new standing Committee or Advisory Board.

The Task Force also proposes several *long-term recommendations* for the Southeast Chapter, comprising long-term initiatives or new ongoing work. The Task Force expects that the next iteration of this group will take up these long-term recommendations beginning in early 2021 and will oversee these and any future DEI initiatives thereafter.

### *A note on the future of this Task Force and continuity for future DEI initiatives:*

- The ARLIS/SE DEI Task Force will disband once a new body is formed to take up these DEI initiatives. It is assumed that by the end of this year's regional business meeting the SE Chapter membership will have discussed the proposed short term goals and recommendations, and that several if not all of them will be approved and slated for completion by the end of the year.
- After the ARLIS/SE Conference, until a DEI Committee or Advisory Board is in place, the members of this Task Force will work to complete any approved short term recommendations by the end of 2020.
- The ARLIS/SE Executive Board terms will change at the start on 1 January 2021: Leah will become the new Past President and Lindsey will begin her year as Chapter President. Given that Leah is the current Chair of the DEI Task Force and that Lindsey is the ex-officio member, the Task Force feels confident that there will be strong continuity from this formative work to the next iteration of this group, and that the ARLIS/SE Executive Board will prioritize regional DEI efforts for the foreseeable future.