

Information and System Design for Diversity

Problem

As cultural heritage practitioners increasingly seek to preserve and provide access to the voices of disenfranchised and marginalized communities, the design of information systems must take into account the fact that such systems are not free from bias. Information systems embody and reinforce cultural norms, re-inscribing the inequity and oppression found therein. While there is widespread understanding of this problem, there are fewer examples of concrete interventions in current practice or education. In October 2016 we were awarded a National Forums grant from the U.S. Institute of Museum and Library Services to support a project on these issues.

Project Design

Goal: concrete intervention for widespread circulation

Main outcome: teaching and learning toolkit for practitioners in cultural heritage systems design

We chose a teaching and learning toolkit because that format:

- Teaches the problem as a research question, prompting a more critical design approach rather than giving specific recommendations that will quickly be obsolete
- Involves users as active learners rather than passive readers
- Provides immediate resources to practitioners while prompting new development in the education of future practitioners

Features of our toolkit will include:

- Modular, adaptable lessons, usable individually or as a whole
- Readings on existing work, both theoretical and practical
- Real-world case studies, serving as design provocations to exemplify or problematize theoretical concerns

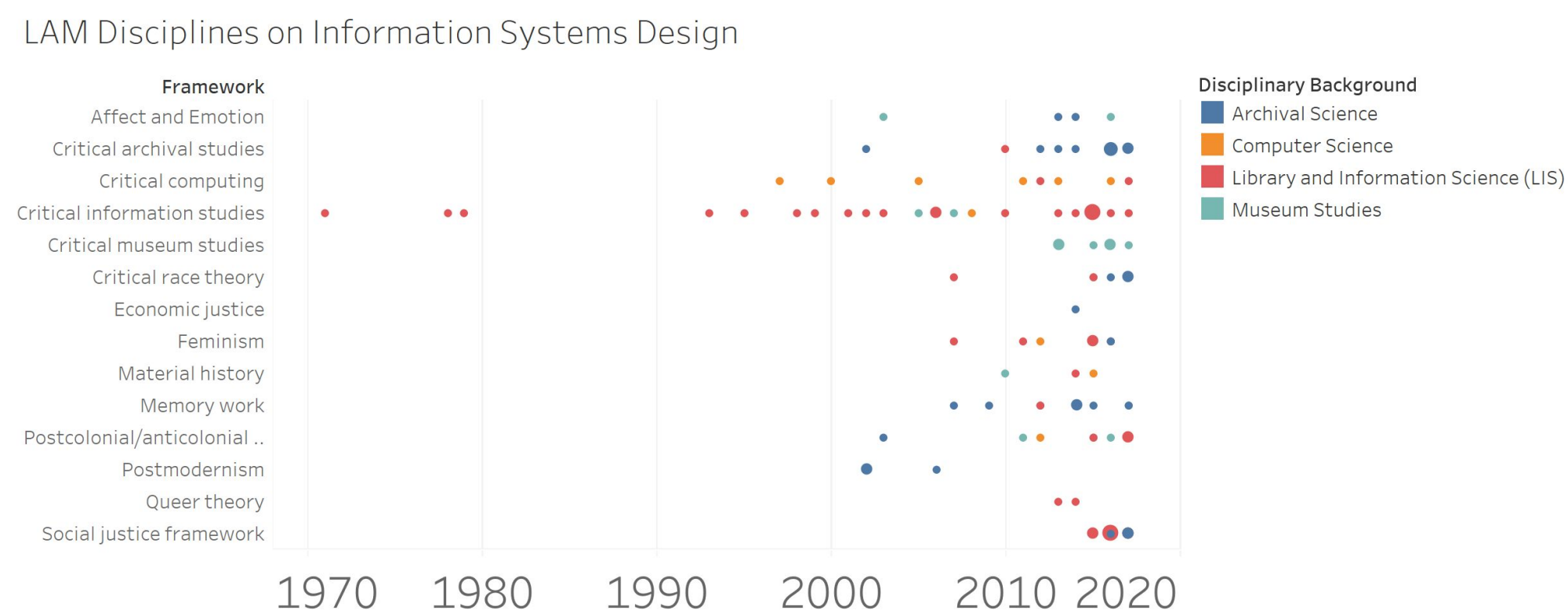
The toolkit will be created via an inclusive and participatory process, with an **Opening Workshop** to gather and discuss important case studies, a smaller **Core Design Group** to create the toolkit with methods for public review, a **Launch and Review Forum** to present the toolkit for additional constructive criticism, and final release in Fall 2018 for testing in classrooms Fall/Winter 2018.

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The views, findings, conclusions or recommendations expressed here do not necessarily represent those of the Institute of Museum and Library Services.

Toolkit Foundations Bibliography (version 1)

About this dataset: It has 203 works centered on diversity and inclusion in information systems design, particularly in cultural heritage contexts. It excludes works on general issues of diversity and inclusion in cultural heritage, and focuses on shorter works appropriate for a Toolkit. Because the collection is both selective and interdisciplinary, we used visualizations to show us gaps where we might have missed research, or the research might not exist.



Initial Findings

- In the U.S., “race” seems to often mean just Black or White, excluding Asian American, Latinx, Native American, and other communities.
- Design for people with disabilities seems to happen only at the user experience level; we wonder if there is more to do at other levels.
- Diversity and inclusion are well-represented in LAM literature and curricula, but usually not in context of developing information systems.
- Power, representation, inclusion, and “the archive” are studied in many different disciplines, but cross-disciplinary exchange is rare.
- Our theory/recommendation/praxis continuum is overly-simplistic, and creates boundaries where there may not be.
- It is difficult to model “the stack” with the right level of abstraction, particularly for cultural heritage work in complex networked environments.
- Our scan is limited to the U.S, Australia, Canada, and New Zealand, particularly LIS literature; we need a broader focus in the next phase.
- Pertinent articles are scattered across disciplines; we are sure to have missed many relevant pieces.
- Relying on published work undoubtedly causes us to miss relevant projects and practices that aren’t formally written up for circulation.



Amanda Rust, Cara Messina, and Julia Flanders

Digital Scholarship Group
Northeastern University Libraries

Call for Participation

dsg.neu.edu/d4dDH2017

- Sign up for email list
- Submit case study proposals
- Submit items for bibliography
- Teach with the Toolkit (Fall 2018)



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