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LIS 590: Directed Field Work at Stevenson Elementary
Professor Helene Williams
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Assignment 5: Final Reflection

This diversity audit, conducted during the Fall quarter of 2023, was initiated as part of a one-credit Directed Fieldwork with Stevenson Elementary School's folktale collection. The project, sponsored by Teacher Librarian Jennifer Ching, aimed to address concerns about the collection's inadequate representation and service to the diverse student population at Stevenson. By systematically collecting data, the audit sought to analyze the strengths and weaknesses of the existing collection, providing a foundation for determining priorities in future weeding and collection development to better represent the student body. An additional aim of the project was to provide lists of suggestions for both weeding priorities and additions to the collection.

As indicated in my report, Stevenson's student population includes a great deal of racial, ethinic, and linguistic diversity. Through my findings, we are able to quanitify just how ineffectively the collection represents the student population, and determin priorities for weeding and collection development.

Additionally, this audit was an opportunity for me to investigate the methodologies used for data-driven diversity audits and evaluate their efficacy. Through my research with Professor Melanie Walsh into data-driven diversity audits, have developed a skeptism for such tools offered by library vendors. Through this fieldwork, I have been able to see the effectiveness of data-driven, as well as the work required to collect and analyze such data. My hope is to contribute to a publicly available corpus of diversity data on books, so that libraries who wish to conduct an audit on their own, will have access to some information and tools to make their jobs easier.

At the beginning of my work, I was unsure how long my data collection and subsequent computational analysis would take. After my first couple visits to Stevenson, I estimated that I would complete my data intake by midquarter, which I was able to accomplish, despite the regular interruptions from class visits. These visits were a welcome interruption from my independent work, and provided me with valuable insights into the students interests and behavior in the library. I was incredibly impressed with Jennifer's ability to facilitate those class visits. I would visit Stevenson on Fridays, so students would generally have a lot of energy in the library and Jennifer would always be able maintain students' attention through story times, and then manage the room as 30+ students would run every which way to find their book for the week. I would alway help out at this time, just to divert some of the crowd of students hounding Jennifer for book recommendations for each visit.

I think my background in data science and diversity audit reesarch made me a uniquely strong fit for this DFW, the data collection and analysis part of the project went quite smoothly for the most part. After working with the data, I would definitely format my dataset differently in the future to allow for better computational analysis.

I was not expecting to work as much with the students as I did. I have little experience working with elementary students, so there was definitely a learning curve there for me. A reader's advisory is a lot different with a young person. It was often difficult to understand what specifically they were looking for, as well as finding resources given my lack of familiarity with children's literature. I was able to make use of my reference and database search skills to help students out, but it was a challenge. One example of this was a student Ovi who wanted help finding "buddy books." I was confused because, "buddy books" is a term Ms. Ching uses as a tool to remind student to put books back where they belong on the shelf if they do not want to check it out – student should put the book back next to their "buddy." I did my best to to explain to Ovi that buddy books are not a specific kind of book, but rather a concept for books on the shelf. Ovi was insistent that she wanted to get a buddy books. I asked what the buddy books

were about, and she began to describe a book about *bunnies,* not buddies. I was not hearing her correctly. We were able to find a book from the BonBon series that she was looking for.

Interactions such as these were common. While they were not directly related to the work I was doing, they provided valuable insights into how student interact with the collection, which influenced my data colleciton. Through observing student's browsing habits, I mimicked this behavior in my data collection. Students would looks at the covers and flip through the pages. I would do the same to collect data on representation.

My computational analysis took more time than expected, and I unfortunately did not have as much time as I would have hoped to provide weeding suggestions and selection suggestions. While I was able to provide weeding suggestions and selection criteria, I was not able to craft a list of books to add to the collection. These challenges were valuable in that they helped me gain a more thorough understanding of the significant time and resources intensiveness required to conduct a diversity audit, as well as following through with weeding and replenishing the collection. To intentionally find resources that would best suit the students of Stevenson Elementary could probably be a DFW of its own. The library vendor likely does not have sufficiently diverse resources, or else the collection would be more diverse than it is. This means that one would have to search for smaller independent publishers to find the best resources, which would then create the additional task of having to process and catalog the book to add it to the collection. Jennifer certainly does not have the time to do this on her own or I am sure she would have done it. I hope that the next DFW student will be able to see this process through.

This DFW paired very well with the Collection Development course I took this quarter, as well the Intro to Data Science course I was a reader/grader for. This audit reinforced the concepts I was learning in both of those classes really well, as well as built up my transferable skills in collection development, project managment, youth services, data analysis, data curation, and data viszualization. It was a great joy working with the community at Stevenson

Elementary, and I will miss them. I hope this audit will be of aid in making their amazing library even better.