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Competencies in Action: ACRL Standards and Library Diversity Plans

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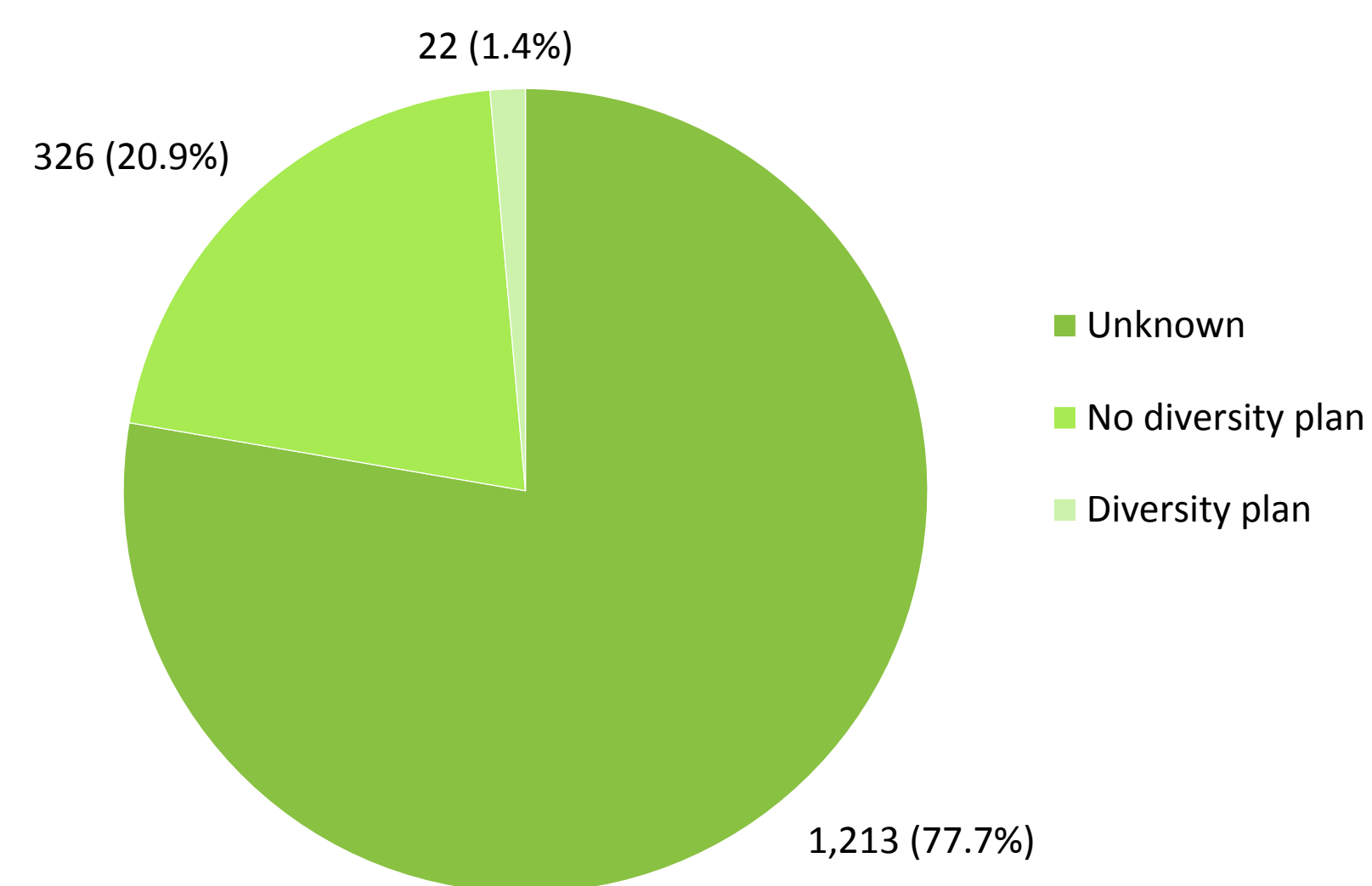
BACKGROUND

In 2012, ACRL published *Diversity Standards: Cultural Competency for Academic Libraries* to guide academic libraries to better serve diverse populations. Some academic libraries have created individual diversity plans to define how to best serve diverse patrons. How do academic library diversity plans reflect these ACRL standards? What standards are underrepresented? Do the standards reflect current policy and/or practice, or is there evidence that current policy and/or practice have been informed by these standards? The intersections between diversity plans collected from U.S. academic libraries and the standards are explored through content analysis. Examples of how these standards are reflected in diversity plans can help those engaged in diversity efforts learn how to integrate these standards into their own plans to ensure inclusive learning environments.

METHODOLOGY

- Content analysis
 - Deductive analysis
 - Coding
- Study limitations & challenges
 - Single coder
 - Diversity plans only, not strategic plans or university-level diversity plans
 - Unknown quantity for sampling purposes
 - Although 1,561 libraries solicited, only 22 plans collected for analysis

Diversity plans at 4-year U.S. colleges & universities* (n=1561)



*public and private non-profit schools in all 50 states and Washington, D.C. only

FINDINGS

DIVERSITY STANDARDS:
Cultural Competency for Academic Libraries (ACRL, 2012
<http://www.ala.org/acrl/standards/diversity>)

Standard	No. of plans	No. of references
Cultural awareness of self and others	4 (18%)	4
Cross-cultural knowledge and skills	10 (45%)	15
Organizational and professional values	20 (86%)	71
Development of collections, programs, and services	19 (86%)	165
Service delivery	17 (77%)	121
Language diversity	6 (27%)	18
Workforce diversity	21 (95%)	197
Organizational dynamics	22 (100%)	144
Cross-cultural leadership	9 (41%)	36
Professional education and continuous learning	22 (95%)	82
Research	3 (14%)	3

TOP 3 STANDARDS

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| <p>Organizational dynamics</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "Emphasize importance of civility in the workplace and foster positive working relationships" • "Improved communication for and participation in diversity efforts across all Libraries' locations" • "Library seeks to institutionalize and assess diversity in all aspects of the Library's performance" | <p>Workforce diversity</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "Develop and implement recruitment and retention strategies for staff, faculty, and students from underrepresented groups" • "Coaching regarding unconscious bias for search & screen committees, as well as supervisors" • "Investigate additional retention incentives; i.e., a mentoring program" | <p>Professional education & continuous learning</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "Organize workshops and other activities on topics related to diversity and have discussion of workplace applications" • "Create practical experience opportunities where possible for Libraries staff, especially diverse staff pursuing MLS/MLIS degrees and Library Support Staff Certification." |
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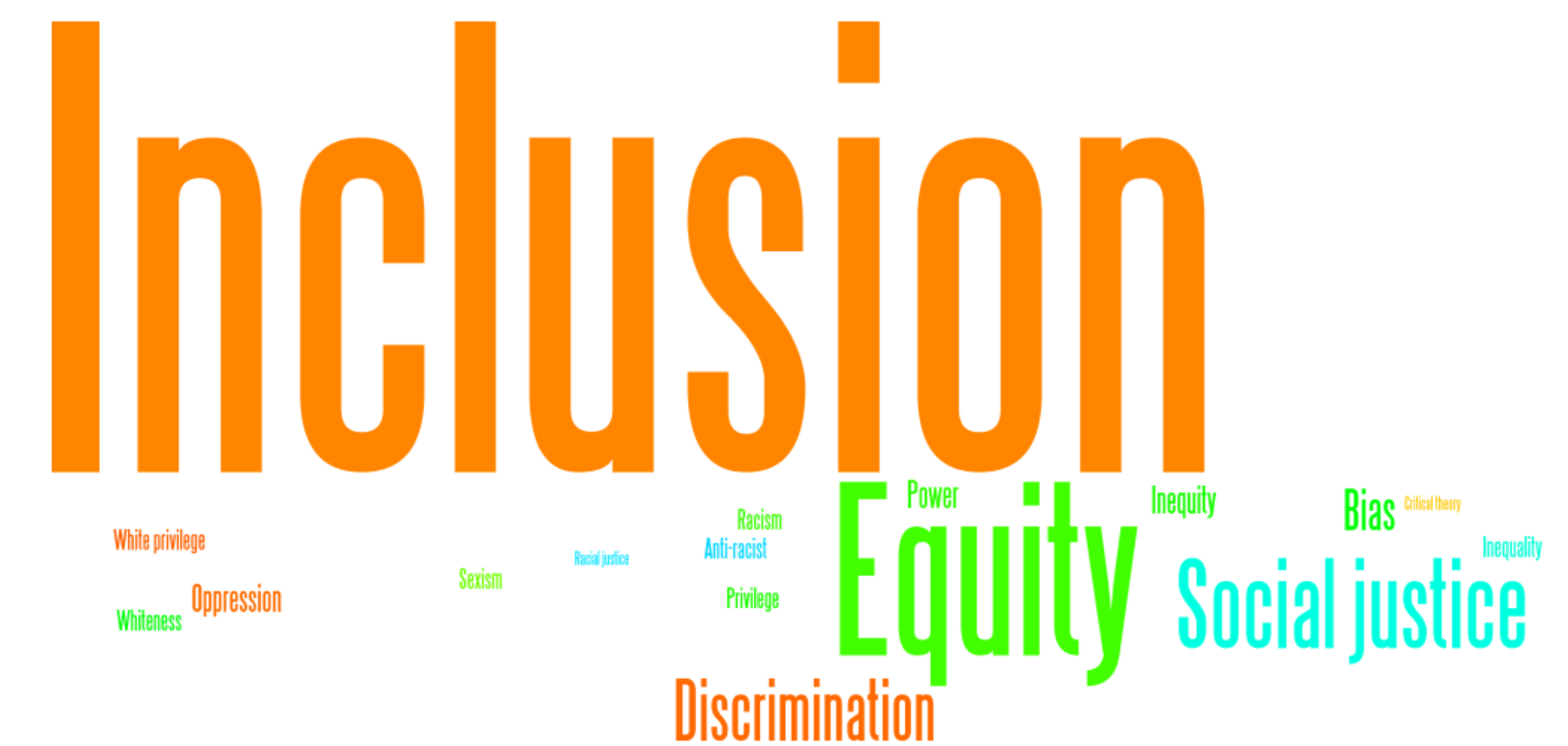
BOTTOM 3 STANDARDS

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| <p>Language diversity</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "Create guides and brochures in languages other than English, e.g. Chinese, Japanese or Spanish." • "Explore translating portions of the Library's webpage into other languages, in order to highlight diversity and be more welcoming." • "Highlight regional and historical linguistic diversity in signage by creating select trilingual signs" | <p>Cultural awareness of self & others</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "Individual diversity / intercultural competence goals" • "The creation of these displays will be an important opportunity for all members of University Library staff to become involved in increasing their own and others awareness of many cultures and points of view." | <p>Research</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "Library faculty is also encouraged to engage in publishing and research relating to topics relating to diversity." |
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OBSERVATIONS

- **Organizational dynamics:** Includes topics like workplace climate, assessment, and employee engagement. Without a good understanding of an organization's culture and climate, it is very difficult to implement new initiatives or develop new programs, especially if the members of that organization do not feel like they are valued members or if they have to work in hostile conditions.
- **Workforce diversity:** The lack of diverse racial representation, particularly among faculty, is a real problem. We have all heard time and time again that research has shown how important it is for students to see themselves represented at the front of the classroom—why wouldn't this also be true for libraries, the places that support the work they do in the classroom? So it's not too surprising to see that most of the diversity plans I looked at included a focus on recruitment and retention of diverse employees.
- **Professional education & continuous learning:** Honing our skills in cultural competence is no different from learning new pedagogical techniques for instruction, or familiarizing ourselves with new cataloging rules. Again, it is not a surprise to see professional and continuing education rise to the top in these plans, with an emphasis on encouraging employees to undergo diversity training, and to encourage underrepresented staff to further their education by pursuing a professional degree.
- **Language diversity:** It is surprising how little this standard was present across the diversity plans, especially as our campuses are welcoming more and more students whose primary language is a language other than English.
- **Cultural awareness of self and others:** One could make the argument that finding ways to implementing all of the other standards would inevitably lead to greater cultural awareness of one's self and of other people, it is important to be explicit in recognizing the importance of starting with self-awareness as a foundation for the other competencies. However, this may be one of the hardest standards to assess. What kind of metrics should be used to measure this competency?
- **Research:** In the ACRL document, this definition is extrapolated to cover actions such as support and encouragement for librarians and library staff to conduct research related to diversity. In particular, the document talks about ensuring research on topics related to diversity are valued in retention, promotion, and tenure processes.

CONSIDERATIONS



Should current conversations around diversity and inclusion inform the language of academic library diversity plans?

What are the implications of the absence of certain words in diversity plans? Words such as "racism," or "privilege"?

What other ways can we codify the ACRL standards into our daily practice? Most libraries do not have a stand-alone diversity plan. Can these be incorporated into larger strategic plans?

Intersectionality is a concept that can inform how we look at the standards, and how we put the standards into practice. How can we challenge ourselves and the profession to be more articulate around intersectionality? Do we fully understand how serving diverse patrons means serving patrons who not only have multiple, intersecting identities, and who may also be multiply marginalized?