

Research Design Challenges of an Early Career EDI Researcher

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Abstract: Research doesn't always go as planned. There are the usual challenges of balancing resources and shifting timelines to accommodate the unexpected. Throw in the learning curve of an early career researcher and the multi-faceted understanding and application of equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) in archives, and designing a research project becomes a complex journey of understanding. This presentation will outline challenges the researcher faced in designing and modifying a research project examining EDI initiatives in digital collections metadata practices. More specifically, it will address the challenges of: defining and operationalizing equity, diversity, and inclusion; ensuring the design is inclusive itself through sampling methods and input from experts; navigating organizational and terminology differences among academic archives; and finding space for self-care and understanding. While this research project is ongoing and has not yet reached the data collection stage, these challenges give insight into the complexity of archival research designs and prove that just as much can be learned from the process as from the results.

About the author:

Jessica Serrao is the Metadata Librarian for Digital Collections at Clemson University. She creates, enriches, normalizes, and maintains metadata for digitized historic materials of the Libraries' Special Collections and Archives. She also develops and implements metadata standards and policies to ensure practices adhere to local and national standards. Her research interests lie at the intersections of metadata, ethics, and inclusive representation of marginalized groups in the archival record. Jessica holds an MSLS from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill with a Concentration in Archives and Records Management and Certificate in Digital Curation, an MA in Public History from North Carolina State University, and a BA in Anthropology from Binghamton University.