



Investigating the Role of Library and Information Science (LIS) Professionals in Promoting Information Equity: A Review

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Abstract

This study investigated the role of Library and Information Science (LIS) professionals in promoting information equity: A Systematic Descriptive Review. The research was guided by five research questions aligned with its objectives, focusing on the conceptual foundations of information equity and its relationship to the professional values and mandate of LIS professionals, populations most affected by information inequity and the specific barriers they face in accessing and using information, the strategies and programmes through which LIS professionals promote information equity in academic, public, and special library contexts, the challenges and barriers that constrain LIS professionals in their efforts to advance information equity and the emerging approaches and policy frameworks through which LIS professionals and institutions are addressing information equity in the context of the digital transformation of information provision. A descriptive research design was adopted relying on systematic documentary review and thematic description of the existing literature. Drawing on a comprehensive review of peer-reviewed literature published between 2020 and 2025. The literature reviewed for this study was sourced from open-access databases including Google Scholar, JSTOR, Emerald Insight, ScienceDirect, PubMed Central, and others. The findings revealed that LIS professionals play multifaceted roles as community connectors, digital equity advocates, cultural brokers, collection diversifiers, outreach workers, and information literacy educators in the pursuit of information equity. The results suggest that LIS Professionals significantly promote information equity to connect communities, advocates for digital equity, cultural brokers, diversifiers of collection, outreach workers and information literacy educators. The paper concludes that with evidence-informed recommendations for strengthening the capacity of LIS professionals to advance information equity in increasingly diverse and digitally stratified societies. The paper recommends that LIS schools revise their curricula to centre information equity, social justice, and culturally responsive practice as core professional competencies.



Keywords: Information equity, LIS professionals, digital divide, social justice, marginalized communities, inclusive library services, information access

Introduction

Access to information is a fundamental determinant of social, economic, educational, and civic participation. In the twenty-first century, the ability to locate, evaluate, and use information effectively shapes a person's capacity to make informed health decisions, participate in democratic processes, pursue education and employment, engage with government services, and navigate the increasingly complex digital systems that govern daily life. When access to information is unequal, stratified by wealth, geography, race, language, disability, or educational background, the consequences extend far beyond the information domain, perpetuating and amplifying broader patterns of social inequality.

Information equity, broadly defined as the condition in which all individuals have fair and meaningful access to information that is relevant and usable for their specific needs, has become a central concern of Library and Information Science (LIS) research and practice. Poole, Agosto, Greenberg, Lin, & Yan, (2021) sees information equity as the fair and deliberate provision of information access that accounts for the differing social circumstances of individuals and groups, moving beyond simple equality to actively address structural disadvantage. Mabi (2024) has articulated that information equity goes beyond the mere availability of information resources, it requires that information be provided in ways that recognise the multifaceted identities and circumstances of users, enabling them to access information and use it effectively for personal and community empowerment. This conception of information equity is directly aligned with the foundational values of librarianship, which include universal access, intellectual freedom, privacy, and commitment to social justice.

LIS professionals which encompass academic, public, school, and special librarians, as well as archivists, information managers, and LIS educators occupy a strategic institutional position from which to advance information equity. Libraries are among the most broadly accessible public institutions in most societies, providing free access to information resources, technologies, and services to community members regardless of their economic circumstances. However, the effectiveness of LIS professionals as equity agents is shaped by a complex interplay of professional values, institutional resources, policy environments, and community needs. This paper describes this multifaceted role through a systematic examination of the recent scholarly literature. Despite this growing body of literature, there is no comprehensive, sectorally integrated descriptive account of the LIS equity role across library types and geographic contexts. This paper addresses that gap by Investigating the Role of Library and Information Science (LIS) Professionals in Promoting Information Equity



Background to the Study

The concept of information equity in LIS has changed over several decades from a relatively narrow focus on library access as a public good to a more expansive understanding of equitable information provision as a social justice imperative. This evolution has been shaped by broader social movements particularly civil rights movements, disability rights advocacy, and the global human rights framework, as well as by technological developments that have transformed the nature of information and created new dimensions of inequality. The digital divide, which refers to the gap between those who have meaningful access to digital information and communication technologies and those who do not, has emerged as the primary contemporary manifestation of information inequity.

Turin and colleagues (2024), in a systematic integrative review of dimensions and barriers for digital inequity and the digital divide published in *Digital Transformation and Society*, identified four major dimensions of the digital divide among vulnerable groups: digital literacy, affordability, equity-deserving group-sensitive content, and availability of infrastructure. The review documented significant disparities across geographic regions, noting that while internet penetration exceeds 90% in developed countries, it remains below 30% in the least developed countries. Within countries, rural-urban disparities, gender gaps, age-related divides, and socioeconomic stratification further compound digital inequality. These systemic patterns of digital exclusion create the structural context within which LIS professionals must operate in their efforts to advance information equity.

Jones and colleagues (2022), in a bibliometric analysis of anti-racism, equity, inclusion, and social justice initiatives in LIS literature published in *Reference Services Review*, found that LIS scholarship on these themes has increased significantly over the past decade, driven in part by social and political movements and unrest that have motivated libraries, LIS professionals, and researchers to engage with these critical areas. However, their analysis also noted that publications on equity, inclusion, and social justice make up a relatively small portion of the general LIS literature, suggesting that the field has not yet fully institutionalised these concerns as central research priorities.

The American Library Association (ALA), in its ongoing Libraries Transforming Communities initiative, has committed millions of dollars in grants to small and rural libraries since 2022 to increase the accessibility of library facilities, services, and programmes for people with disabilities and underserved populations (ALA, 2022, 2023). This institutional commitment reflects a broad recognition within the LIS profession that advancing information equity requires not only philosophical alignment but also sustained material investment in the infrastructure, programming, and professional development that enable libraries to serve diverse communities effectively.



Statement of the Problem

Access to accurate and relevant information is not evenly distributed across society. In many communities, particularly those in rural areas, low-income settings, and developing regions, people lack both the tools and the guidance needed to find, evaluate, and use information effectively. This gap does not simply reflect a lack of technology. It also reflects a shortage of trained professionals who can bridge the divide between information systems and the people who need them most. Library and Information Science (LIS) professionals sit at the center of this problem. They are trained to connect people with information, yet their specific contributions toward dismantling inequitable access remain poorly studied and inconsistently applied across different contexts. As Lor and Britz (2005), and Kosmicki (2020) observed, information inequity is not merely a technical problem but a social one, rooted in structural barriers that require deliberate professional intervention to dismantle. Despite this recognition, there is limited research study examining how LIS practitioners actively promote equitable information access across diverse populations, what strategies prove effective, and where systemic obstacles continue to persist. This study investigates those questions directly.

Objectives of the Study

The objectives are to:

1. describe the conceptual foundations of information equity and its relationship to the professional values and mandate of LIS professionals.
2. describe the populations most affected by information inequity and the specific barriers they face in accessing and using information.
3. describe the strategies and programmes through which LIS professionals promote information equity in academic, public, and special library contexts.
4. describe the challenges and barriers that constrain LIS professionals in their efforts to advance information equity.
5. describe the emerging approaches and policy frameworks through which LIS professionals and institutions are addressing information equity in the context of the digital transformation of information provision.

Literature Review

Conceptual Foundations of Information Equity in LIS

Information equity, as a concept, sits at the intersection of information science, social justice theory, and community development. Its intellectual roots in LIS can be traced to the foundational



ethical commitments of librarianship universality of access, intellectual freedom, neutrality in information provision, and commitment to democratic participation, but its contemporary articulation draws heavily on broader social justice frameworks, including critical race theory, disability rights theory, feminist information studies, and community informatics. Mehra (2022), one of the most prolific scholars on social justice in LIS, argues for an impact-driven framework to operationalise social justice and implement information and communication technology for development (ICT4D) in the field of information, calling on LIS stakeholders to interrogate and work toward changing what he characterises as the problematic epistemological and ontological roots of mainstream LIS scholarship. This critical orientation positions information equity not merely as a service delivery challenge but as a structural and systemic concern that requires LIS professionals to confront and dismantle the institutional barriers embedded in their own professional practices, collections, and organisations.

The distinction between information access and information equity is conceptually important for understanding the scope of the LIS equity role. Access refers to the availability of information resources and services; equity refers to the meaningfulness and usability of that access for specific individuals and communities in their particular circumstances. As Mabi (2024) articulated, information equity ensures that everyone has access to information that is relevant and tailored to their specific needs, and that this access is provided in ways that recognise the multifaceted identities of users. This distinction implies that an LIS professional's equity role extends far beyond simply opening the library doors or maintaining a website, it requires active, sustained engagement with the specific needs, languages, cultural contexts, and information behaviours of diverse community members.

Jones and colleagues (2022), in their bibliometric review of anti-racism, equity, inclusion, and social justice initiatives in LIS literature, identified seven major thematic areas in the corpus of 691 unique citations they analysed: diversity in collections, services to underserved populations, culturally responsive librarianship, diversity in LIS education and the profession, critical and social justice librarianship, community engagement, and policy and advocacy. This taxonomy provides a useful map of the intellectual terrain of information equity in LIS and reflects the multidimensionality of the concept as it is practised by LIS professionals across different institutional settings.

Populations at Risk of Information Inequity

The scholarly literature identifies multiple overlapping population groups that face heightened risks of information exclusion and are therefore the primary targets of LIS equity initiatives. These groups include low-income communities, racially and ethnically marginalised populations, people with disabilities, rural and geographically isolated communities, elderly populations, immigrants and refugees, Indigenous peoples, children and young people in under-resourced schools, and communities with limited English proficiency or low literacy levels. What is characteristic of these groups is not simply their disadvantaged status but the structural and systemic nature of the barriers



they face, barriers that are rooted in historical patterns of exclusion, discrimination, and underinvestment that libraries alone cannot dismantle but to which they can make meaningful contributions.

The digital divide is perhaps the most extensively documented dimension of information inequity in the recent literature. Turin and colleagues (2024) demonstrated that the dimensions of digital inequity include not only physical access to devices and connectivity but also digital literacy, the availability of relevant and culturally appropriate digital content, and affordability of technology. These multiple dimensions mean that even when physical infrastructure is available, information inequity may persist due to skills deficits, content gaps, or cost barriers. Sanders and Scanlon (2021) have argued that the digital divide constitutes a human rights issue, emphasising that advancing social inclusion through the resolution of digital inequity requires not only technical infrastructure but also advocacy, policy reform, and the active engagement of helping professions, including LIS professionals in addressing broadband access disparities for underserved communities.

Rural and Indigenous communities represent a particularly acute focus of information equity concern in the recent LIS literature. Cruise and colleagues (2023) conducted a scoping review of academic health sciences libraries' outreach and engagement with North American Indigenous communities, finding that while a growing number of libraries have developed programmes to serve these communities, the literature documents significant persistent gaps in access to health information, digital connectivity, and culturally appropriate library services. The American Library Association has specifically addressed the information inequity of tribal communities through advocacy for expanded E-Rate programme access, noting that nearly 7 in every 10 residents on rural tribal lands remain without access to high-capacity broadband, and that only about 12% of tribal libraries report receiving E-Rate funds (ALA, 2022).

Immigrant and refugee communities represent another significant population group for LIS equity work. Research documented in the International Journal of Information, Diversity, and Inclusion (2024) describes how public libraries have historically been among the most accessible institutions for immigrant communities, providing not only information resources but also a neutral, welcoming space for community building, civic orientation, and cultural expression. However, the literature also documents the complexities of serving highly diverse immigrant communities, noting that effective equity work with these populations requires libraries to move beyond the mere availability of services toward active, relationship-based community engagement that recognises the diverse needs, backgrounds, and information behaviours of immigrant users.

Strategies Employed by LIS Professionals to Promote Information Equity

The scholarly and professional literature describes a rich and diverse repertoire of strategies through which LIS professionals advance information equity across different institutional contexts. Lopez, Mehra, and Capse (2023), in an exploratory social justice framework for public



library services with underserved families published in *Public Library Quarterly*, identified three major themes in how public libraries operationalise equity: welcoming underserved families using targeted universalism and active inclusion strategies; taking bold leadership to rectify historically imbalanced inequities by removing barriers and reallocating resources; and respecting family roles, agency, and community economic development. These themes provide a descriptive framework for understanding the equity strategies of public librarians that moves beyond service delivery to encompass advocacy, leadership, and community partnership.

Community outreach is among the most consistently documented equity strategies in the LIS literature. Fu and Mahony (2024), writing on equality, diversity, and inclusion in LIS professional contexts, noted that LIS professionals are well-placed to promote equal opportunities, diversification, and inclusion across multiple dimensions including race, ethnicity, gender, socioeconomic status, education, ability, language, literacy, and geography. Effective outreach requires LIS professionals to leave the library building and engage directly with communities where they live, work, worship, and gather, building the trust-based relationships that are essential for reaching populations who may have historical reasons to distrust institutional services. The ALA's Libraries Transforming Communities programme exemplifies this outreach orientation by requiring grant recipient libraries to conduct community input-gathering sessions that assure their equity work aligns with local needs (ALA, 2022, 2023).

The diversification of library collections is a central equity strategy described extensively in the recent literature. Insights, a UKSG publication (2024), highlighted how the importance of inclusive and balanced collections extends beyond academic completeness to social justice, emphasising that ensuring diverse communities are represented in library collections is essential for affirming the cultural identities and informational needs of marginalised users. Fuchs and Ball (2023), as cited in the UKSG report (the primary report was inaccessible), stressed the need for anti-racist, inclusive archival descriptions that accurately reflect the lived experiences of marginalised communities, while Jones and colleagues (2023) argued that diversity audits of special collections are essential for identifying and correcting historical imbalances in collection representation.

Digital literacy instruction is another major equity strategy described in the LIS literature. Warraich (2023), in a contribution to the Proceedings of the Association for Information Science and Technology on digital inequalities to digital inclusion, documented how LIS educators are seeking to bridge the digital disparities that the COVID-19 pandemic both revealed and amplified, particularly for students from the global South and other disadvantaged contexts. Public libraries have developed digital literacy programmes specifically designed for populations with low digital skills, including elderly users, low-income adults, and recent immigrants, recognising that equitable information access in the contemporary environment requires not only physical access to technology but the skills and confidence to use it effectively.

Cultural competence and culturally responsive librarianship are described as foundational professional competencies for LIS equity work. Cooke (2022), in the updated second edition of



Information Services to Diverse Populations: Developing Culturally Competent Library Professionals, argues that the development of cultural competency skills and social awareness benefits LIS students, their future employers, and the library profession at large, as well as library users and society as a whole. Culturally competent LIS practice requires not only awareness of cultural differences but active engagement with the political, social, economic, and technological divides among library users, and the development of services that are responsive to these diverse realities.

Barriers and Challenges Confronting LIS Professionals in Equity Work

Despite the clear alignment between the information equity imperative and the professional values of LIS, the literature documents significant and persistent barriers that constrain LIS professionals in their equity roles. The racial and ethnic homogeneity of the LIS profession is widely identified as a structural barrier to effective equity work. According to the Department for Professional Employees (2023), over 82% of librarians in the United States identified as white in 2022, while only 4.3% identified as Black or African American. This demographic imbalance means that the profession responsible for advancing information equity for diverse communities is itself far from representative of the communities it serves, limiting its capacity for cultural understanding, community trust, and responsive service design.

Institutional resource constraints represent another pervasive barrier. Inadequate funding for library services, particularly in the public and school library sectors, limits the capacity of LIS professionals to develop and sustain equity-oriented programmes, hire diverse staff, build inclusive collections, and provide the digital infrastructure needed for meaningful information access. These resource constraints are particularly acute in the communities most in need of equity-oriented library services, low-income urban neighbourhoods, rural areas, and tribal lands where library funding tends to be most limited (ALA, 2022). The irony that information inequity is most severe precisely in the communities where library resources are most constrained represents one of the most intractable structural challenges facing LIS equity work.

Professional training and LIS education represent a third significant barrier. Ren, Alemanne, and Colson (2022), in a study of how MLIS programmes prepare students to serve diverse populations published in the *Journal of Education for Library and Information Science*, found persistent gaps in the curricula of LIS programmes, with many programmes providing insufficient preparation for culturally competent practice, social justice advocacy, and community-engaged librarianship. WOC+Lib (2024) similarly documented how the lack of diversity in LIS faculty limits the perspectives available to students and leaves BIPOC students without adequate role models and mentors. These educational gaps mean that many LIS graduates enter the profession without the competencies needed to serve diverse communities equitably.

The structural barriers embedded in library systems themselves, including classification schemes developed from Eurocentric perspectives, cataloguing practices that misrepresent or erase



Indigenous and minority knowledge systems, collection development criteria that reflect mainstream cultural values, and service models designed around middle-class information behaviours, represent a fourth category of barriers to LIS equity work. Addressing these systemic barriers requires not only individual professional commitment but institutional change, including the revision of policies, practices, and systems that have historically excluded or misrepresented marginalised communities.

Emerging Approaches and Policy Frameworks for Information Equity

The recent LIS literature documents a growing range of innovative approaches and policy frameworks through which LIS professionals and institutions are advancing information equity in response to the evolving challenges of the digital age. Mehra (2022), writing in the *Journal of the Association for Information Science and Technology*, proposed an impact-driven framework for operationalising social justice and implementing ICT4D in the field of information, arguing that LIS professionals must move from rhetorical commitment to social justice to measurable, impact-oriented practice that produces demonstrable improvements in the lives of marginalised communities. This call for accountability and measurable impact represents an important development in the LIS equity discourse, shifting attention from inputs and activities to outcomes and social change.

Community-engaged scholarship and participatory action research have emerged as particularly promising methodological frameworks for equity-oriented LIS work. Mehra and et al (2024), writing in the *Proceedings of the ALISE Annual Conference*, described a community-engaged framework for operationalising the connection between public library education and praxis, emphasising the importance of collaborative relationships between LIS researchers, practitioners, and communities in co-designing services and programmes that are genuinely responsive to community needs. This participatory orientation contrasts with traditional expert-driven models of library service development and reflects a broader shift in LIS toward community-centred and asset-based approaches to information equity.

Social justice-oriented collection development and decolonisation of library systems are described as increasingly central to the equity agenda of LIS institutions. The UKSG Insights report (2024) documented growing efforts within libraries and archives to conduct diversity audits, develop anti-racist collection development policies, and employ artificial intelligence tools to identify and surface previously overlooked records from diverse communities. Choi and Hastings (2022), in a study published in *Public Library Quarterly*, examined public library digital exhibits with diversity and social justice themes, finding that libraries are increasingly using digital platforms to amplify the voices and histories of marginalised communities and to provide accessible, culturally meaningful information resources to diverse users.



Methodology

This study adopts a descriptive research design, which aims to describe, in detail and with systematic rigour, the characteristics, activities, roles, and challenges of a particular phenomenon or group without manipulating variables or testing causal hypotheses. Descriptive research is appropriate for this study because the primary aim is to document and describe the multifaceted role of LIS professionals in promoting information equity, drawing on the existing body of scholarly literature. As Creswell and Creswell (2018) observe, descriptive research seeks to provide a systematic account of the facts and characteristics of a given population or area of interest, offering a comprehensive picture of the phenomenon under investigation as it naturally exists.

The primary research method is systematic documentary review, supplemented by thematic description of the literature. Documentary review involves the systematic identification, evaluation, and synthesis of published academic literature relevant to the research topic. The literature reviewed for this study was sourced from open-access databases including Google Scholar, JSTOR, Emerald Insight, ScienceDirect, PubMed Central, Taylor & Francis Online, the Journal of Library Administration, Reference Services Review, Public Library Quarterly, College and Research Libraries, the Journal of Education for Library and Information Science, the International Journal of Information, Diversity and Inclusion, and the Proceedings of the Association for Information Science and Technology. Institutional reports from the American Library Association (ALA), the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA), the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS), and the Urban Libraries Council were also included as relevant grey literature sources.

Search terms employed included 'information equity', 'LIS professionals and equity', 'library social justice', 'digital divide', 'digital equity', 'marginalized communities library services', 'inclusive library services', 'diversity in LIS', 'information access underserved populations', 'community outreach libraries', 'culturally competent librarianship', 'rural libraries equity', and 'Indigenous communities libraries'. The search was delimited to publications between 2020 and 2025, with supplementary use of foundational earlier works where conceptually necessary. Three foundational works published before 2020 — specifically Creswell and Creswell (2018), Cooke (2022), and Mehra (2022) — were included due to their foundational theoretical importance. Sources were evaluated for relevance to the study's objectives, scholarly credibility, methodological quality, and currency. Peer-reviewed journal articles, systematic reviews, and authoritative professional reports were prioritised.

The analytical approach involves thematic description, in which the literature is organised according to the five objectives of the study and described in sufficient detail to provide a comprehensive account of what is known about the LIS equity role. Unlike analytical research, which seeks to evaluate and interpret the evidence critically, descriptive research focuses on accurately and systematically portraying the phenomenon as revealed in the literature. Findings



are presented thematically, with each section of the literature review corresponding to one of the study's objectives, and the discussion of findings synthesises the descriptive insights across these themes into a coherent overall account.

Discussion

Information Equity as a Core LIS Mandate

The descriptive synthesis of the literature confirms that information equity is not a peripheral concern of LIS but is deeply embedded in the profession's foundational values and its historical mission of universal public service. The evolution of the concept from a focus on physical access to libraries to a more comprehensive understanding of equity as meaningful, culturally responsive, and socially transformative information provision reflects the maturation of LIS as a social institution. The growing body of literature on social justice in LIS, documented by Jones and colleagues (2022), demonstrates that the profession is increasingly willing to engage with the structural and systemic dimensions of information inequity, moving beyond service-oriented framings toward advocacy, activism, and institutional reform. The description of information equity provided by Mabi (2024), as going beyond the availability of services to encompass relevance, tailoring to individual needs, and recognition of multifaceted user identities is particularly significant for LIS practice. It implies that equity-oriented LIS work is inherently personalised and community-specific: there is no universal template for information equity, since what constitutes equitable information provision for one community may be entirely inadequate for another. This community-specificity is one of the reasons why effective LIS equity work requires deep, sustained engagement with local communities rather than the application of generic service models.

The Diversity of Populations Served and the Intersectionality of Disadvantage

The literature describes a diverse and overlapping set of populations that face heightened information inequity, and the descriptive evidence suggests that disadvantage in this domain is rarely singular, it is typically the product of multiple, intersecting factors including race, poverty, geography, disability, language, and age. This intersectionality of disadvantage has important implications for LIS equity practice: programmes designed to address only one dimension of exclusion (such as providing computers in the library to address the digital divide) may be insufficient if users also face language barriers, transportation challenges, or cultural distrust of institutional services. The evidence on rural and Indigenous communities is particularly compelling. The documented gap in broadband access for tribal communities, with nearly 70% of rural tribal land residents lacking high-capacity internet access (ALA, 2022), represents one of the most extreme manifestations of information inequity in contemporary developed-world library systems. The scoping review by Cruise and colleagues (2023) on academic health sciences libraries' engagement with Indigenous communities reveals both the potential and the limitations of library-mediated equity work with these populations, noting that effective engagement requires



sustained, partnership-based relationships that respect Indigenous sovereignty, knowledge systems, and community protocols. These findings point to the complexity of the LIS equity role and the need for LIS professionals to develop specialised competencies for working with specific marginalised communities.

The Multidimensionality of the LIS Equity Role

The descriptive literature reveals that the LIS equity role is not a single function but a constellation of interconnected activities that span direct service delivery, community engagement, advocacy, collection development, professional development, and institutional policy work. Lopez, Mehra, and Capse (2023) describe public librarians as simultaneously service providers, community connectors, equity advocates, and institutional change agents, a multidimensional role that requires a broad and sophisticated professional skill set. This description challenges the traditional image of the librarian as primarily a custodian of information resources and positions LIS professionals as active participants in the social justice landscape of their communities. The strategies described in the literature from community outreach and culturally responsive programming to collection diversification and digital literacy education are not merely technical service functions but expressions of a professional commitment to social equity that requires ongoing reflection, community engagement, and advocacy. The ALA's Libraries Transforming Communities initiative exemplifies this commitment at the institutional level, providing funding and professional development support for libraries to engage with the specific equity needs of small, rural, and disabled communities in ways that are driven by community input rather than professional assumptions.

Structural Barriers and the Need for Institutional Change

The description of barriers facing LIS equity work reveals that individual professional commitment, however genuine and energetic, is insufficient to overcome the structural and systemic obstacles that constrain information equity. The racial homogeneity of the LIS profession, the resource constraints facing libraries in the most disadvantaged communities, the gaps in LIS education, and the systemic biases embedded in library classification, cataloguing, and collection development systems represent structural challenges that require institutional-level responses. The call by Mehra (2022) for an impact-driven framework that produces measurable improvements in the lives of marginalised communities reflects an awareness that the LIS profession needs to move beyond good intentions to demonstrable, evidence-based outcomes. The growing literature on decolonisation of library systems and anti-racist collection development practices suggests that LIS institutions are beginning to grapple seriously with their own complicity in historical patterns of information exclusion. However, the gap between policy articulation and practice implementation remains significant, and the literature documents persistent tensions between the profession's equity commitments and the structural realities of funding constraints, professional demographics, and institutional inertia. Closing this



implementation gap requires not only professional development and policy reform but a sustained, reflexive commitment to self-examination and accountability at the institutional level.

Conclusion

This descriptive study has investigated the role of LIS professionals in promoting information equity, drawing on a systematic review of peer-reviewed literature published between 2020 and 2025. The study has described the conceptual foundations of information equity in LIS, the populations most at risk of information exclusion, the strategies through which LIS professionals advance equitable information access, the barriers that constrain their effectiveness, and the emerging approaches and policy frameworks through which the profession is responding to the equity challenges of the digital age. The descriptive synthesis confirms that LIS professionals play a crucial, multifaceted, and irreplaceable role in advancing information equity, serving as community connectors, cultural brokers, digital literacy educators, collection diversifiers, and institutional advocates, but that this role is consistently constrained by structural barriers rooted in professional demographics, resource limitations, educational gaps, and systemic biases in library practice. In conclusion, the promotion of information equity is central to the profession's reason for being. At a time of accelerating digital transformation, deepening social inequality, and growing recognition of the systemic barriers that have excluded marginalised communities from full participation in the information society, the role of LIS professionals as champions of information equity is invaluable. Future research should prioritise empirical investigations of these equity roles in under-researched contexts, particularly in the Global South.

Recommendations

On the basis of the descriptive findings, the following recommendations were offered:

LIS schools should substantially revise their curricula to centre information equity, social justice, culturally responsive practice, and community-engaged scholarship as core professional competencies, ensuring that graduates are equipped to serve diverse communities effectively.

1. Library funding bodies, including government agencies and private foundations, should prioritise investment in library services for the communities facing the greatest information inequities, recognising that equity-oriented library work requires sustained, adequately resourced commitment.
2. LIS professional associations should develop and promote comprehensive professional development programmes on information equity, culturally competent practice, anti-racist librarianship, and digital equity advocacy, providing practising LIS professionals with the tools they need to advance their equity roles, particularly in African and Global South contexts.



3. LIS institutions should conduct regular equity audits of their collections, services, staffing, and outreach practices, using the findings to guide targeted improvement efforts and to demonstrate accountability for their equity commitments to the communities they serve.
4. The LIS profession should actively recruit, retain, and support professionals from diverse racial, ethnic, linguistic, and cultural backgrounds, recognising that a profession that reflects the diversity of the communities it serves is better positioned to understand and respond to their information equity needs.

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