Group Discussion - Q1.

What barriers have you encountered within your library and or externally within your institution, to this subject?

Please write your responses below this sentence.

- Difficult when working in such white universities, lack of staff diversity, big leap for individuals to engage in discussions constructively. Imposter syndrome, people not feeling confident, qualified, expert enough to comment and push decolonisation forward.

- The work can often focus on future/present and avoid looking at the past - historical roots/development of racism/colonialism.

- Too much pressure, then put on students, burdening them, esp. students of colour.
- And also on librarians - great arranging events like this - but where are the academics? More joining up, between students, librarians and academics - beyond those academics in post-colonial, race studies, etc.

- Bigger problems engaging disciplines outside the humanities and arts where it more obviously sits. What about science, tech, business being decolonised or engaging with the discourse and process for their disciplines?

- The pitfall of tokenism - how can we avoid this?

- Auditing work being done is highlighting whiteness of curriculum. Barriers in addressing in publishing biases, peer review process, and bias towards academic work published in English language, ignores knowledge from elsewhere. Publishing industry itself being white dominated.

- External political climate in friction with this work... especially with academic being a target, seen as too progressive/liberal/‘woke’.

- Good example at UWE Bristol - graphic design degree show piece on Talking About Race.

- Issue of getting this systematically addressed/embedded in universities, e.g. via Course revalidation plus staff training (to avoid tokenism/lip service).

- BAME staff/students - burden of having to represent, being pulled onto multiple projects, having to explain (job on top of job).
• Academics are not aware of it so not interested. Cpd?Melissa5942
• Library can only buy books from the reading list so no scope to push for it without academic buy-in

• Purchasing within the large consortia doesn’t allow for smaller suppliers with range of stock

• People wondering why the library is involved in this topic?

• Students concerned it is disruptive to the curriculum and that is their priority

• Difficult to make it the Library feel welcoming to people of different backgrounds

• Worry about being tokenistic

• Issues with buying via purchasing consortia and being unable to source books outside a limited geographical area

• Lack of awareness in the library of initiatives happening in the wider university

• Lack of understanding and awareness around decolonisation as an issue and how it affects the curriculum

• Resourcing issues - staff available to carry out decolonisation activities, money available to purchase resources

• No institutional wide steer

• Time to dedicate to the work alongside other work

• Everyone thinks the work is already happening

• Worry about having the right language to talk about it- be open to learn and be open to be corrected

• Taking a holistic approach - not just collections but services and spaces- look at everything

• Governance

• Asking students to do the diversifying work, eg suggesting reading list additions - is this their responsibility?
● Difficult to purchase resources. Engaging with students, to learn critically and think outside the box. Lack of staff in some institutions to take on responsibilities relating Decolonising The curriculum. Questions on the subject, what does it actually mean, how to interpret it to the wider community in universities? Difficulties trying to break with traditions.

● Depends on levels of wider discussions at university and activism within student community.

● Is it a library role? Thought that it should be led by academic or students.

**Group: Winchester, Royal Holloway, Brunel, King’s College London, Sussex**

● Resistance from library leadership and senior management teams who argue it’s not the library’s place to make interventions - myth of neutrality etc

● No subject librarians - functional model - so difficult to influence stock selection and faculty liaison

● White fragility: majority white workforce - white librarians articulating “it’s not our place” - lack of acknowledgement of white privilege and bias

● Not part of the library culture, which likes to think it’s delivering ‘neutral customer service’

● Attitude of it’s not our role - it belongs to the arts etc

● Lack of understanding of the concepts and history of what decolonising really means - fear of how to intellectually engage

● Lack of time to do this difficult work - difficulty in justifying it as a need to embed in daily practice rather than an ‘add-on’

● Lack of wider institutional strategy to address decolonising and institutional racism

● Lack of understanding from faculty in the agency and expertise that librarians and library/archive workers have in addressing and co-constituting the colonial mechanisms of the university

● Apathy

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● Positionality - acknowledging that white privilege is part of the work

● Complexity - tackling legacy systems and structures.

● It’s a big piece that requires collaboration - with other libraries and with academics and students. Sometimes politics can get in the way of this.

● Lack of subject librarians holds back work.

● Assumption that we’re doing this work already, so what's the point in wasting time and resources formalising it?

● Upper management apathy.
• Worry about not owning the language of the discussion, not feeling legitimate in leading the discussion as "operational"/"professional" staff. Difficulty translating our interest at governance level.

• Re-engaging students after those who initiated the movement left or lost the momentum (too busy with their own studies!)

• Worry about looking tokenistic. How to organise outside Black History Month/LGBT+ history month.
• Different levels of buying in from academic and subject areas.

• Challenges carving out time. Some of us have faced resistance in setting up groups - but this has also provided some freedom and flexibility to set agenda and undertake projects.
• Lack of time
• Patchy awareness
• How to support diversifying reading lists- how do we guide them to good practice- is this a training Issue for librarians?

• Defensiveness from academics

• Lack of data on collections and big deal orders are misleading

• Make up of student body: International v home. Subjects studied.

• Money and support from management has to be linked to awarding gaps to be successful.

• Finance departments don’t like irregular ordering so pressure to buy from. Status quo providers

• Acquisitions budgets
• Updating acquisitions policies
• Rehashed reading lists, not updated by academics
• Librarianship schools (too white)!
• Librarians with adequate language skills to purchase and catalogue
• Lack of support from lecturers and higher admin staff
• Lack of enthusiasm from higher management
• Knowing how to decolonise the curriculum
• Trying to engage lecturers who are not keen
• Lecturers annoyed with librarians suggesting books for curriculum
- Understanding of definition of decolonisation vs diversifying (not same concept).
- Confusion from colleagues as to what this means.
- Removing things from library - are we censoring? Should we be censoring?
- Anxiety about raising issues due to being seen as “bad person” but voices being censored. Professional duty to raise issues. Questions about how relates to science subjects - different approach for sciences, relates to diversifying vs decolonising confusing.
- Systems and existing logics privilege perspective of colonizers.
- Problems of working within systems such as LCSH/LoC.
- Should we use user tagging? UK libs at disadvantage to change LCSH vs US institutions.

- Student projects well received not holistic or joined up only with certain departments whether academic or professional services not on agenda as institutional strategy

- The word decolonise terrifies colleagues fearful because they know it will mean change – some want to engage but don’t know how to and don’t want to offend – it’s a complex topic – barrier is that people don’t know how to engage with it

- Enthusiastic colleague up until you get up the senior management structures
- EDI structure or strategy – HR hostile towards these things - directed to chartered Institute of HR for policies

- Director ignore emails to sort out problems with meeting targets but would want to invite people to speak at conference to make it look like they are doing things

- We are not recognised for this extra work we do and the stress we go through when faced with resistance (resilience)

- Bizarre that’s it up to one individual to create such huge institution wide change

- Sometimes radical change is needed, but as librarians and professionals we may be reticent to stick out.
Financial difficulties at institution can put decolonisation as low priority and make upper management hostile to it