Questions learned: Considering geocultural context within public librarian professional development

Vanessa Irvin
East Carolina University, Greenville, NC, USA
E-mail: irvinv22@ecu.edu

LINQ: The Librarians' Inquiry Forum is a practitioner inquiry model for public librarian professional development whose theoretical foundations are based in New Literacy Studies, Critical Race Theory and social epistemology. This research explains the development of the LINQ methodology and design across four public librarian communities of practices situated in geoculturally-specific locations. Data from the librarian inquiry groups collaboratively researching their professional practice is illustrated to convey how the LINQ model's critical race theory lens is applied to expose geocultural barriers endemic in the library and information science (LIS) field. One dataset is analyzed and discussed to substantiate a common thread through the four inquiry groups over time: that when public librarians work collectively to ask critical questions about their practice, such questions learned, serve to center local cultural values that are geographically specific and unique, redefining what it means to be a public librarian in geoculturally specific contexts.

Keywords: Critical race theory, geoculture, LINQ, practitioner inquiry, public librarians

1. Introduction

Public librarians are often looking for opportunities to learn and hone skills for professional development so that they can continuously serve their constituencies with cultural, social, and intellectual competence. It has been demonstrated throughout interdisciplinary research, particularly in education, that a reflective approach to studying one's professional practice is a sustainable method for professional development. Likewise, librarians are often taught some form of reflective activity during library school, with some librarians continuing that practice (e.g., journaling) throughout their careers. However, when reflective professional development is done collectively within a community of practice, the outcomes for a holistic development of professional identity can occur (Irvin & Reile, 2018; Stornaiuolo et al., 2019; Mehra, 2022).

Practitioner inquiry is the systematic, intentional, critical approach to the reflective study and research of a group's practice (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1993). For librarianship, practitioner inquiry introduces a low-to-no-cost, localized professional development model that positions librarians as researchers of the impacts of their professional practices on patrons, stakeholders, co-workers, themselves, and the community at large. For public librarianship, practitioner inquiry is framed within an

ethnographic methodology to learn the ways in which the geocultural context of librarians' community of practice informs and contributes to the librarian identity ensconced within traditional public library systems.

Research into questioning and learning how public librarians enact and engage in LIS practitioner inquiry revealed common and shared issues stemming from the profession's theoretical foundations that are embedded in whiteness (Gibson et al., 2018; Chancellor, 2019; Dunbar, 2021). To confront the – isms ethos of LIS, the LINQ model's conceptual framework embraces three theoretical constructs: New Literacy Studies (NLS), Critical Race Theory (CRT), and social epistemology.

This research highlights the evolution of LIS practitioner inquiry through the work of four groups: the Philadelphia[1] Librarians' Group, which includes the Westchester (NY) Librarian's Group (2009–2014), the HSPLS[2] Inquiry Forum (2015–2017), and Hui 'Ekolu[3] (2018–2021). This cumulative study of librarian inquiry left open the question: "What is the librarian's identity?" The common outcome of all these groups is that "the librarian identity" superseded any disparate identities around race, gender, or class. Conclusively, public librarians identified as "librarian" before being a Black librarian or an Asian librarian (for example) across geographical and cultural contexts. Some of the most meaningful outcomes of the research included:

- Librarians became more mindful of their professional practices' impact on patrons and colleagues.
- Librarians self-identified and embraced their reading tastes and knowledge-based practices as part of the profile of their service community (meaning, librarians realized they were members of the communities they served).
- Librarians recognized that their racial, ethnic, gender, and sexual identity constructs flew out the window considering their mutual understanding of "the librarian identity."
- Librarians identified systemic "isms" at play in library administrative policies and actions that directly impeded librarians' socio-cultural knowledge to enact their agency and voice as part of their professional practice and identity.

LIS practitioner inquiry has evolved from the Philadelphia/Westchester (NY) Librarians' Group (2009–2014) to the HSPLS Librarians' Inquiry Forum (2015–2017) to Hui 'Ekolu[4] (2018–2021). This research journey punctuates LINQ's purpose

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[1]From 2009–2014, the Free Library of Philadelphia, the public library system for Philadelphia, Pennsylvania convened as an inquiry-based community of practice with public librarians from the Westchester (NY) Library System. Westchester librarians participated from 2009–2012. For this penultimate paper discussing all four librarian inquiry groups from 2009–2021, I am refining the names of the groups from previous publications (e.g., Irvin & Reile, 2020; Irvin, 2021) to 1), differentiate the geography of each group and 2), to provide clarity for the umbrella term, The Librarians' Inquiry Forum and its acronym, LINQ. See Irvin et al. (2018), Irvin and Reile (2020), Irvin (2021) as listed in the reference list.

[2]HSPLS is the acronym for the Hawaii State Public Library System, the public library system for the State of Hawaii, USA.

[3]"Hui 'Ekolu" means "three groups" in Hawaiian.

[4]Diacritics are respectfully rendered throughout this paper as consistently as possible.

as an ongoing investigation of the intersectional critical ways the reflective study of professional practice and identity is a perpetual conversation between librarians in LIS communities of practice.

When the Philadelphia Librarians' Group began in 2009, librarians entered the group feeling weary, bitter, disillusioned, burned out, overworked, misunderstood, and underappreciated. Indeed, established LIS research talks about the challenges of public librarians in isolated branch locations (rural, small city, and large urban systems), where burnout syndrome is common in public library service (Caputo, 1991; Scheiner, 1996; Dickinson et al., 2005; Juniper et al., 2012; Lindén et al., 2018). Five years later, in 2014, the Philadelphia group continued to regularly meet to study their professional practices together for professional development.

Beyond the formal research, the Philadelphia Librarians' Group independently "kept going" because they gained value from strategically sharing their professional experiences via discourse centered on group response to literature, workplace resources, and talk. Reading and responding to books that were popular in their libraries was an essential aspect of the methodology of the Philadelphia Librarians' Group because eventually, the librarians began reading from their interests, making the connection that their reading interests were as active an aspect of their professional practice as their patrons'. In other words, an important outcome was the librarians' realizing they were patrons of the same libraries where they worked. This interest convergence significantly shifted librarians' stances towards their professional practices, where burnout and disillusionment were transformed into a renewed enthusiasm and commitment to engaged professional practice.

While joyous and rewarding, practitioner inquiry is not necessarily an easy nor a tidy process. Practitioner inquiry opens space to ask challenging critical questions about identity, practice, policy, and workplace dynamics. For example, in the Westchester Librarians' Group, practitioner inquiry was sometimes scary, messy, and jolting because the courageous participating librarians were being asked questions they had never contemplated before, and they were organically reflecting on identity constructs that had been dormant. To keep the group from devolving into commiseration, inquiry activities such as recording and sharing critical incidents, collaboratively journaling during group sessions, and critically engaging in email threads beyond group meetings kept discourse consistent and maintained group openness and trust. Librarians felt safe to say when practitioner inquiry was working for them and when it was not. Practitioner inquiry gave the librarians "voicedness" towards exploring systemic issues in librarianship in ways that exposed their suppressed silences at work (Philadelphia Librarians' Group journals, 2009–2010; Westchester Librarians' Group discourse, 2010). The Philadelphia/Westchester Librarians' Groups were transformative for the librarians because they could unpack crucial work issues that were systemic concerns embedded in library administrative policies and practices that had been in place for years. More so, an essential outcome of this early iteration of LINQ: The Librarians' Inquiry Forum revealed that "the librarian identity" is rooted in a Westernized epistemological framework with a colonizing socio-cultural heritage that centers intellectual

power, hierarchical control, and positional hubris, which marginalizes equitable and inclusive ideas from values based in a geocultural context.

During my time in Hawai'i (2015–2022), I quickly realized that the Hawaii State Public Library System (HSPLS) was an apt site to further explore public librarian identity formation via practitioner inquiry because the library system embraces urban and rural library services within a context of mainstream American ethos intertwined with native culture. As Hawai'i's only municipal public library system, these nuances are deeply textured historically, socially, and epistemologically within the HSPLS. This research sought to begin the journey of unpacking what it means to be a public librarian in an isolated yet idyllic environment where "identity" is a salient yet silent complexity. LINQ's primary purpose is to create avenues where these silences can be voiced for all of us to hear, acknowledge, learn from, and appreciate ways that librarians can collaboratively research and study practice to critique the paradigms of LIS and reflect on ways in which we can disrupt abusive power dynamics and socio-cultural injustices that frame our profession's ethos.

2. Insider/outsider researcher identity

As an African American woman who is a first-generation college graduate, including the first in my entire family's history (dating back seven generations) to earn a doctorate, I have been an insider/outsider with all the LIS practitioner inquiry groups I have worked. With the Philadelphia group, even though the librarians were my cultural kin which made me an insider, I was still an outsider because I was doing academic research and had to navigate how to tell the group's story without betraying cultural and personal trust. In Westchester, there were only two Black librarians in the group – and I was one of them. So, I was an insider as a librarian but an outsider as a woman of color. In Hawai'i, my insider identity was as a librarian. Still, I was an outsider because I was not born or raised in Hawai'i (therefore not local), I have nominal Asian ancestry (1% Filipino), and I am not Hawaiian.

During my time as a LIS faculty member at the University of Hawai'i, I lived on the island of O'ahu for seven years, making me a visitor to Hawai'i based on my understanding and experience of local cultural norms there. Thus, throughout my research, I enter my explanations, language use, and discussion about Hawaiian terms and events with the utmost humility and respect. In my work, my intention when I speak about any culture within the research context is always with sincerity, never with the intent to harm. However, another aspect of critical ethnographic inquiry is that expression, once released into the world, takes a life of its own.

Thus, I apologize in advance if anything I express in my work offends, as I am only an expert on my life experience and family heritage. I am ever-learning as I share my research journey and outcomes.

That said, throughout this research, I am not claiming expertise in any geoculture, not even my own Blackness because African American geoculture is regional, pluralistic, diasporic, and global (e.g., hip hop), thus broad, deep, and kaleidoscopic in its

dynamic and expression. Likewise, although I am one-quarter European American descent, I do not claim white or Anglo-American cultural norms or expressions. I proudly claim to be a descendant of seven generations of African American ancestors buried in the soil of the Eastern (maternal) and Piedmont (paternal) regions of the state of North Carolina, whereas two generations ago, all my grandparents moved during the Great Migration period to Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Yet and still, I do not claim expertise in Southern culture either, even though the American South is the geocultural identity that flows in my DNA and on the lands where I currently live, pray, and work. Practitioner inquiry reminds us that we are always simultaneously an insider with some groups and an outsider with others. The insider/outsider stance is always an aspect of practitioner inquiry because the method requires everyone to locate their various identity constructs so that insider privilege can be acknowledged, and the fringe agency (outsider stance) can be unpacked as a reflective space.

3. Research framework and objectives

Hawai'i offers a relevant geocultural context to investigate public librarian practitioner inquiry. To take a clue from the demographics of the librarians I worked with for the HSPLS Librarian Inquiry Forum, Hawai'i-based librarians are a diverse group of librarians from various Asian and Polynesian heritages. Due to the Hawaiian Islands' geographic distribution and the state's long-established cultural diversity, exploring the nuances of public library service in Hawai'i's public libraries can be an essential contribution to LIS discourse about CRT-based inquiry, professional practice, and librarian identity. The LIS practitioner inquiry model, LINQ: The Librarians' Inquiry Forum, uses critical inquiry as a concept that leans on the intersectionality aspect of critical race theory (Espinal et al., 2018). CRT-based inquiry is the lens through which LINQ participants confront the multiple ways public library systems' LIS heritage-based patriarchal, hegemonic, and colonialist structures affect their professional practice and identity. LINQ's community of practice recognizes that "people belong to more than one demographic or cultural group and are consequently affected by disenfranchisement or inequality in more than one way" (Kumasi, 2011, p. 210). LINQ recognizes the intersectionality of librarianship as a gendered profession that struggles with power issues within a professional hierarchy that aligns with the mainstream patriarchal norms. To unpack that intersectionality, LINQ leverages the interest convergence tenet of critical race theory which recognizes that a buy-in that mutually benefits majority and minority interests is needed to offer a socially reconstructive approach to public librarian identity in specific geocultural contexts (Bell, 1980; Dixson & Bloome, 2007; Milner, 2008; Irvin & Reile, 2020; Irvin, 2021).

The space that LINQ creates is purposefully and strategically opened so that participants can build relationships and trust to articulate and unpack professional experiences that are inequitable, oppressive, or discriminatory. LINQ centers on voicedness, another essential aspect of critical race theory, where storytelling and

experiential knowledge is LINQ's primary discursive method for reflecting on questions presented, shared, and learned (Dixson & Bloome, 2007; Gibson et al., 2018; Matthews, 2021).

One of the beautiful aspects of Hawaiian culture is that it centers storytelling and knowledge sharing as integral to relationship building (de Silva, 2019). Given this cultural value in Hawai'i, it was no wonder that the administrative level of the Hawaii State Public Library System is demonstrably well connected with their librarians (Irvin et al., 2018). However, to consider the geographical challenges of the Hawaiian Islands, with six islands spread across over 300 miles of ocean, an early question for this research was, do the librarians in Hawai'i work together as *'ohana*?[5] Do the librarians connect to share, build, and exchange knowledge for themselves as a community of practice? What does professional development look like at the HSPLS, and how do those initiatives affect a librarian's daily work? Do the librarians have a space to "talk story"[6] amongst one another to learn more about how to confront and navigate systemic oppressions that are endemic to American organizational structures? Also, how do cultural nuances play a role (or not) with local non-Hawaiian librarians serving Hawaiian patrons? These early questions served as a springboard for learning more about what it means for librarians to serve a diverse American reading public that often comes through the public library's door grappling with social issues.[7]

To that end, LINQ: The Librarian's Inquiry Forum sought to demonstrate three objectives: librarian identity, geocultural context, and professional development. The focus on librarian identity explores how public librarians learn how their information needs affect their professional practice. Librarian identity is built collectively and collaboratively when participants share, receive, and build knowledge together. The geocultural context of every library system and, therefore, librarian communities of

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[5] 'Ohana means "family" in Hawaiian language and is a cornerstone of Hawaiian society. In all aspects of groupings in Hawaiian culture, your 'ohana is a source of cooperation and support. Hawai'i's librarians can be considered a vocational 'ohana, a group connected because of its profession. See S.T. Boggs, *Meaning of 'Aina in Hawaiian tradition*, University of Hawaii, 1977, https://scholarspace. manoa.hawaii.edu/items/1f646f35-494e-499f-bbd8-3159c55aa0ad and, A.P. Morishige, et al., NāKilo 'Āna: Visions of biocultural restoration through Indigenous relationships between people and place. *Sustainability* (Basel, Switzerland), 10, 20pp, 2008, https://doi.org/10.3390/su10103368.

[6] "Talk story" is a Hawaiian pidgin phrase that means to informally share your context as a means of communicative engagement. I like to think of talk story as perhaps a midpoint between informal conversation and storytelling. The beauty of talk story (in my humble opinion) is that you are encouraged to share your stories with one another, which in turn, means you are heard and understood. I quickly learned that talk story is an important part of social culture in Hawai'i. For example, bureaucratic processes are initially complicated and difficult if you approach it in the quick, efficient, no-nonsense American mainstream fashion. However, when you talk story (share your context) to say, open a bank account or to submit paperwork, processes become amazingly efficient because you've connected with the teller, or the representative and they understand your situation and feel connected to your success. Talk story is a captivating aspect of local culture in Hawai'i.

[7] The film, "The Public" (produced by Hammerstone Studios, Living the Dream Films, and E2 Films; distributed by Greenwich Entertainment, 2018), addresses the universality of the challenges of social issues as part of the sociocultural dynamics of American public libraries.

practice are specific and unique to the land upon which library systems and librarians work and operate. LINQ's critical lens seeks to identify cultural patterns and nuances within a geocultural context (e.g., Philadelphia, Westchester, NY, and Hawai'i) that contributes to librarian identity. LINQ honors geocultural context so that librarians' community of practice is most appropriately matrixed, leveraging local and heritage-based knowledge systems. Ultimately, LINQ establishes a low-to-no-cost, in-house professional development model for public librarians as a forum in which they can collaboratively unpack and process librarian professional identity and praxis.

In essence, the overriding objective of LINQ is to learn how practitioner inquiry impacts professional librarian practice within a culturally and geographically specific and unique context. The accomplishment of these goals reveals a broader conversation about public librarian practice and identity in the twenty-first century, where communities worldwide continue to become more and more diverse, with multiple cultural groups continually represented inside the doors of neighborhood libraries that have histories, heritages, and legacies that must be the sphere of its own knowledge ministration.

4. Literature review

To discover what kinds of conversations were being had in LIS concerning inquiry-based professional development initiatives for public librarianship, a query search in major subscription databases was conducted to locate LIS studies using the terms: practitioner inquiry, librarians, libraries, or library (e.g., the search expression "practitioner inquiry" AND librar*). When the search was conducted in premier LIS-focused database, *Library and Information Science Full-Text (Wilson)*, just one result was returned; a peer-reviewed article published in 2016 in the *Journal of Education in Library and Information Science (JELIS)*.[8] When a broadened search query using the Boolean expression ["practitioner inquiry" AND librarian] was queried in the University of Hawaii's online public access catalog, a nominal 35 results were returned that focused on LIS publications. Most of the publications were peer-reviewed articles about inquiry-based research conducted with academic and school librarians. None were about public librarians.

It has been determined that LINQ: The Librarians' Inquiry Forum is the first formal approach to LIS practitioner learning for public librarians, which makes this study all the more meaningful and contributory to LIS discourse.

Notwithstanding action research, which is an established practitioner modality in school librarianship (Harada & Yukawa, 2012; Boulden et al., 2019; Burns, 2020), practitioner inquiry is a "theory of action" founded within the education field (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009).

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[8] See Irvin, V. (2016). Gazing the diversity stance in North America: Bringing practitioner inquiry into the LIS classroom. *Journal of Education for Library and Information Science (JELIS)*, *57*(2), 151-160.

Cochran-Smith and Lytle are pioneers in practitioner inquiry research, advocating for the model as a qualitative means by which educators across various contexts independently and collaboratively study their sites of practice coupled with outsider ethnographic observations of classroom and school culture for comparison/contrast to unpack teacher learning for professional development (1993; 2009).

Terms like "research," "collaboration," "knowledge," "inquiry," "community," and "practice" are enacted in strategic ways within practitioner inquiry to enthuse educators to reflect on "problem-solving, technical improvement, [and] strategic social change" (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1993, p. xiii). LINQ takes this approach and adds reader response theory to the critical inquiry process (Iser, 1978) to marry the librarian's traditional role as collection keeper with their social role as knowledge mediator (Gray, 2012). Thus, in LINQ, librarians "read what the patrons read," share knowledge resources, and pass on institutional memory to collaboratively unpack challenging stances about reading, patrons, LIS work, and, well, *one another* as reflections of the profession of librarianship. Thus, "the work" performed in LINQ is courageous, critical research that confronts the ways in which confluent power and justice dynamics within organizations and communities impact professional practice and professional identity formation.

LINQ: The Librarians' Inquiry Forum is an organic exploration of contrasts: a reflection of successes and failures, solitary and collaborative learning (and unlearning), and a critical investigation into insider/outsider stances of professional librarian practice in the public sphere. Thus, practitioner inquiry within LINQ: The Librarians' Inquiry Forum is not just a navel-gazing jaunt into unraveling professional ire. Instead, LINQ is a dwelling space for making sense of the known and the unknown in librarianship by researching practice to better know/be/do one's inner librarian (Lytle, 2008; Irvin, 2021). Practitioner inquiry seeks to reveal radical truths about one's daily work via balancing theory, its containment within practice, and all of its uncertainty (Mockler & Groundwater-Smith, 2015) due to omnipresent power structures in organizations.

An essential part of the professional mission of public librarians is to perform in a teaching role within the stances of information literacy, bibliographic instruction, storytelling, programming, readers advisory, and reference services. Public libraries are places of learning, and librarians conduct the lion's share of teaching practices in these spaces (Crowley, 2008; Riedler & Eryaman, 2010). In librarianship, we call teaching "instruction," we call learning "literacy," and our educative meme is "lifelong learning." "Teaching" on the frontlines of the public library involves what Riedler and Eryaman call an "alternative library pedagogy that is a method of learning throughout life" (p. 91). Their ideas further underscore my assertion that pedagogical practices in the library balance theory and practice:

> . . . [B]eginning with "daily life itself and the experiential moments it contains-and thus balances theory with practice. Above all, critical library pedagogy recognizes that learner and community experiences are central to the education process,

> meaning that the role of the transformative library and its staff is to facilitate the production of knowledge rather than its transmission. (Riedler & Eryaman, 2010, p. 91)

Indeed, Riedler and Eryaman's position is compatible with Cochran-Smith and Lytle's (2009) concept that practitioner inquiry is an "inquiry stance" enacted throughout the lifespan, interweaving the personal with the professional.

That said, public librarianship saliently centers around professional-to-personal librarian-to-patron relationships that are typically brief encounters (e.g., the reference interview) rife with interactive complexities centered around issues of power, authority, privilege, and agency. To better identify and understand these complexities, LINQ: The Librarians' Inquiry Forum triangulates three discourses as a conceptual framework: New Literacy Studies (NLS), Critical Race Theory (CRT), and social epistemology. New Literacy Studies allows us to more clearly synthesize what we librarians mean when we say "literacy" and "practice" (Street, 1995; Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009). LINQ applies an expanded notion of librarianship's concept of social epistemology, by incorporating CRT's interest convergence principle to identify and unpack ways in which librarian identity can be defined by librarians' investment in equitable relationships between themselves and the library, public service, and one another (Egan & Shera, 1952; Bell, 1980; Milner, 2008; Shera via Budd, 2008).

Within the lens of converging interests for librarians and their approach to practice, critical race theory is foundational to our understanding of ways in which white power, identity, and privilege are disruptive intersectional values "embedded in librarianship" (Chiu et al., 2021, p. 50). Librarian professional practice has long been enacted as an imbalanced and inequitable power dynamic between the patron ("they don't know") and the librarian ("the librarian knows it all") that perpetuates the elitist privilege code of mainstream American society (Dunbar, 2021). Chiu, Ettarh and Ferrati (2021) posit that this LIS power dynamic is an assumption birthed from the bed of white supremacy that perpetuates a fiction of neutrality and vocational awe that presents a fiction of virtuous librarianship rather than an honest and critical examination of LIS's antiquated educational paradigm that inculcates all librarians (regardless of heritage and identity) with an ethos based on the mainstream American paradigm of white supremacy (Gibson et al., 2018; Chancellor, 2019; Dunbar, 2021; Crist & Clark/Keefe, 2022; Overbey & Folk, 2022).

In public librarianship, patrons' information needs invariably fall within the lines of improving life skills and life experiences with answers seemingly accessible from various formats and topics systematically arranged in a physical (books) and virtual (online) library collection. Nevertheless, even within this digital information overload era, although many library users utilize online library services (e.g., virtual chat reference), patrons still prefer to navigate their information needs via social interaction, face-to-face within library walls (Kresh, 2005).

Interpersonal interactions between librarians and library patrons can be perceived as literacy practices that are "best understood as a set of social practices . . . [that

are] mediated by written texts" (Barton et al., 2000, p. 9), where new knowledge is created from signifying everyday information and social practices within "talk" around or about a reading experience. Critical race theory informs us that the literacy event between librarian and patron (e.g., the reference interview) is also embedded with stances of power, social capital, control, and access (Dixson & Bloome, 2007; Kumasi, 2011). Although Dixson and Bloome apply CRT to analyze the nuances of discourse in classrooms, the same complexities of interaction can be applied to social interactions in public libraries, particularly interactions between librarians and library users where "the use of a dialectical process for constructing knowledge about potentials of instructions conversations" (2007, p. 30) occur during the reference conversation. Within this complex interactive space, the public librarian must navigate arbitrary social, personal, and cultural matters during a seemingly short meeting with stranger(s) from varying age groups, heritages, educational and socioeconomic experiences.

Budd's (2008) view of Jesse Shera's iteration of social epistemology confirms that the library is a place where knowledge is generated in various ways. Budd talks about ways in which the reader accesses text in the library and how that experience contributes to the patron's identity formation. Budd cites another social epistemologist, Alvin Goldman (1999), to highlight that knowledge creation is social and thus, social interaction is founded on belief. Budd cites Goldman:

> Knowledge partly consists of belief, and belief is always local or situated because it is always the belief of a particular knower or group of knowers who live at particulars (sic) points in time. But knowledge also partly consists of truth, and when a fully determinate proposition is true, it is true for all time, not just at particular times or places. (Goldman, 1999, p. 21, in Budd, 2008, p. 241)

Shera and Budd's ideas focus on a macro-level perception of library service as a building, a place and a space, which has been invaluable in understanding our service value in communities.

However, I would like to remix the idea of LIS social epistemology with considerations from critical race theory to zoom into the goings on of the public library at a micro level, focusing directly on the knowledge and beliefs of the human being who is the cog in the wheel of library activities, that person at the reference desk – the librarian. I believe that librarians are a vital aspect of the social epistemological discourse that Budd, Shera, and Goldman advocate, rendering librarians as patrons of the very libraries they serve; librarians have a biding interest in what works at the library as a reflection of what is working for them, professionally (Milner, 2008). Thus, librarians are affected by what information comes into the library from patrons, what knowledge is generated in readers' advisory and the reference interview, and how their knowledge and beliefs are transformed by these social practices that are, in actuality, literacy events (Heath, 1983; Street, 1995). Iterated over time, these literacy events become the librarian's professional practice which constructs the librarian's identity.

Librarian literacy events that mount up to become professional practice begs a salient question: What knowledge is being created for the librarian during a reference interview or other social activities in the library? This critical question also indicates tension in professional librarian practice that contributes to forming the librarian identity. Gray (2012) argues that such tension is "always at the core of the professional service of the librarian" (p. 39). Gray calls the tension between servicing users and keeping the library collection accessible the "library utility paradox" (p. 39). According to Gray, this paradox constantly shifts and changes because the librarian's identity shifts and changes as the profession evolves.

CRT forces us to further ask a hard question of LIS: What practices are shifting and changing on top of an epistemological theoretical foundation whose context is historically and politically engineered by mainstream cultural values of whiteness, power, and privilege? In what ways can LIS address the cultural and political history and context of race and racism in American librarianship through "social transformation and reconstruction"? (Dixson & Bloome, 2005, p. 35) In what ways can librarians recontextualize their professional identity and practice with a social epistemology that mitigates a foundational ethos of – isms to a community of practice that is equitable and inclusive in diverse ways? What is the buy-in, the converging interest, for the majority of American librarians to take an inquiry stance towards profession practice? (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009) Where do their interests for service converge with dismantling the – isms ethos of LIS? (Bell, 1980; Milner, 2008; Dixson & Bloome, 2005; Dunbar, 2021) LIS scholarship has been in a decades-long conversation about the identity of the public librarian underwritten by Gray's (2012) point that the 21st-century librarian identity is in a "values-war" between traditional 20th-century ideas of meritocracy and impartiality, which holds the librarian as a neutral gatekeeper to "stuff", and the call for today's librarian to embrace knowledge as a means of necessary intellectual freedom not just for the communities they serve, but also, for themselves as practitioners. The refocusing of the librarian as an arbiter of knowledge instead of "stuff" reconsiders the librarian's agency as a player in the realm of people-to-people engagement in libraries and the communities they serve. In short, Gray (2012) sees the librarian identity as being in a values war between the librarian as custodian of the building and the librarian as custodian of *identity*. This heightened understanding of librarian agency begs accountability for one's own intersectionality. How can we reconcile our maturation?

Houtman (2013) posits that it behooves LIS to nod towards conceptual theories and frameworks that can help us further develop our ideas, definitions, and stances around literacy, learning, and digital practices that frame our identity formation. Houtman posits that in this 21st century, LIS's ideas about literacy and learning are transforming because new technologies like social media impact how we think, read, interact, and learn. This is why in LINQ, we actively engage with new technologies to learn how online literacy practices contribute to librarian practice in the library, or not (Irvin & Reile, 2018; Irvin & Reile, 2020). The LINQ method challenges notions of marking librarian identity and practice with the library as space, place, and

building. LINQ also answers Houtman's and Gray's charge to embrace theoretical frameworks beyond LIS to radically disrupt and transform LIS practice and librarian identity into constructs that give voice to librarians as knowledge-sharers, readers, and patrons of their place of work. To further identify, qualify, and understand librarians' identity formation, it befits us to strategically reflect and critique who we are and what we do for our lifelong learning as information professionals in this dynamic knowledge-based society called the 21st century; and how we do all this, within the realm of "library" in varied geocultural contexts (Kumasi & Brock, 2022).

CRT requires librarians to be accountable for the profession's problematic history and heritage, and their investment in such a toxic paradigm. The LINQ model incorporates CRT– based principles to reveal what it means for librarians to be engaged in literacy practices that are social, personal, ethical, cultural, and heftily political. LINQ is a sustainable method and tool that empowers public librarians to be active, critically engaged researchers and learners about their place of work and their place *in work*, for their entire careers.

5. Methodology and design

One of the ongoing tropes that public librarians extol when lamenting about not having the time or space for professional development is, "I'm so busy." This "busyness" is often blamed on systemic barriers such as being "almost all day on the reference desk," processing paperwork, complying with administrative deadlines, and meeting patron needs (Irvin et al., 2017). Case in point, one LINQ participant reflected that public librarians are so busy that they "get to the point where they don't even remember what they know" ("Yasmin,"[9] HSPLS Inquiry Forum participant, 2016). Thus, the LINQ method was designed to be non-intrusive of worktime by employing synchronous online collaborative workspaces, like *Slack*, so that librarians can communicate with one another at their own pace, on their own time, in real-time *within work time* (Irvin et al., 2018; Irvin & Reile, 2020). Time was discovered to be a crucial element of the LINQ model. Therefore, LINQ's approach presents a platform where librarians can gather during work hours and beyond as a community of practice. The platform needed to offer synchronous and asynchronous communications, be low to no cost, privilege small groups, and have a low learning curve by resembling current social technologies like Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter. The collaborative workspace, *Slack*, fulfills all these criteria.

Slack was an essential part of the LINQ model, where, in the Hawaii groups, technology was the primary interface through which librarians met, shared knowledge, and exchanged resources. With *Slack*, LINQ does not impose on a library administration's budget: the platform is free for unlimited users and only charges for activity more

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[9]Personal names are pseudonyms.

significant than 10K messages (Slack.com, n.d.). *Slack* can be a lightweight platform for large public library systems.

The foundational aspect of LINQ's design strikes at the heart of the librarians' bread and butter: questions. As an inquiry-based method for librarian practitioners, LINQ's driving force is not just the asking of questions but, more so, the *learning of questions*. For librarianship, questions are the centroidal commodity for professional practice: we listen to questions, we ask further questions, we question questions, we research questions, and we resolve questions. In public librarianship, the questions learned heightened professional practice and explored professional identity.

Thus, by the time the Hui 'Ekolu group was formed, the LINQ design involved two main components: a small group of participants (so that everyone could be heard equitably) and a critical question to ignite conversation and reflection to unpack work issues having to do with power and inequity. However, the HSPLS Inquiry Forum taught us that this two-pronged model contains complex nuances of geocultural considerations. To further test these complexities, the LINQ model was refined to apply the small-group-critical-question approach with three groups of librarians and library workers that represented the librarian identity across the career lifespan:

– Preservice librarians (LIS students from the University of Hawaii LIS Program)
– Paraprofessional library workers (The Native Hawaiian Library – ALU LIKE)
– Professional ALA-Accredited librarians (The Hawaii State Public Library System)

Known as *hui 'ekolu* ("three groups"), twenty-two participants comprised the Hui 'Ekolu community of practice at the time of its launch in August 2018, as follows: Since the LINQ model had previously shown that small groups ignite meaningful outcomes for LIS practitioner inquiry (i.e., the Philadelphia and Westchester groups), the Hui 'Ekolu community of 22 participants was further delineated into smaller *hui* ("groups") based on geocultural context (at the request of the participants). The hui were named for their geography as follows: Hui-Kauai (3 participants), Hui-Waianae (4 participants), Hui-Kaimuki (3 participants), Hui-Kona (4 participants), Hui-Molokai (5 participants), Hui-Admin (3 participants). The entire Hui 'Ekolu community met twice a year face-to-face to participate in two-day weekend training sessions. The training sessions were always framed around a thematic critical question. The Hawaiian Library Association, Nā Hawai'i 'Imi Loa,[10] served as the facilitators for the weekend sessions. In-between trainings, the Hui 'Ekolu community operated within their smaller geo-specific hui via the *Slack* platform, email threads, and independently arranged face-to-face meetups. The goal for the hui was to create a resource that they felt would benefit their professional practice or library community. Some hui worked on library programming, installation of art projects, and formalizing their own local practitioner inquiry group for their location.

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[10]For more information about Nā Hawai'i 'Imi Loa, visit: https://www.nahawaiiimiloa.com/.

Table 1
Participants – hui 'ekolu, training1, August 10, 2018

Hui (group)	LIS career stage	# Participants
LIS students	Preservice	3
Native Hawaiian Library – ALU LIKE	Paraprofessional	10
Hawaii State Public Library (HSPLS)	Professional (ALA-accredited degree)	9
Total		**22**

In Hawai'i, the geoculture places its foundational agency in the sacredness and power of the *'āina*, or the land. The concept of *'āina*, which means "land" in Hawaiian, but literally translates to "that which nourishes" (https://blogs.ksbe.edu/alohaainaproject), is the foundation upon which knowledge, nourishment, empowerment, and connections between people take place, are honored and actualized. Morishige et al. (2018) inform us that, [t]hough 'aina is commonly used to reference land and resources, it is important to clarify that a deeper meaning of the term centers around the reciprocal relationships between the lands, oceans, and people which feed and sustain well-being. Beyond the physical and/or material aspect of provisioning sustenance, this concept also includes feeding and sustaining the emotional, mental, and spiritual dimensions of well-being. (pp. 5–6)

When considering the earlier inquiry groups, the truth about the land as foundational to reciprocal relationships, cultural progression, and social well-being was equally relevant. The geocultural context of where we do our work became a vital requisite for the LINQ design. With this delicate understanding of the importance of approaching inquiry-based engagement with mindful awareness of the terrain upon which we perform our lives, the LINQ model began to take form.

With the LINQ conceptual model in mind, Hui 'Ekolu presented three framing questions in the form of a Gallery Walk[11] activity at its August 2018 launch event: Framing Question: What is librarianship in Hawai'i?

- Question 1 – knowledge: What do you feel needs to be the focus of Hui 'Ekolu?
- Question 2 – practice: What are library and information services (LIS) in Hawai'i?
- Question 3 – culture: How should Hawaiian culture influence librarianship?

During the Gallery Walk, participants roamed the stations, with colorful post-it notes and pens in hand, to read the questions, engage in conversation, reflect on their thoughts, and then post a response as they were self-motivated to do. Participants had access to all three questions and could engage with them as often as they wanted. The activity lasted 30 minutes before the group reconvened to exchange reflective impressions, responses, and ideas.

Having participants mindfully walk and read the room to reflect on the group's framing questions helped us learn what people mean when they think about or discuss

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[11]The Gallery Walk activity as described in this research is adapted from Katherine Feeney Jonson's, *60 strategies for improving reading comprehension in grades K-8* (1st ed.), Corwin Press, 2006.
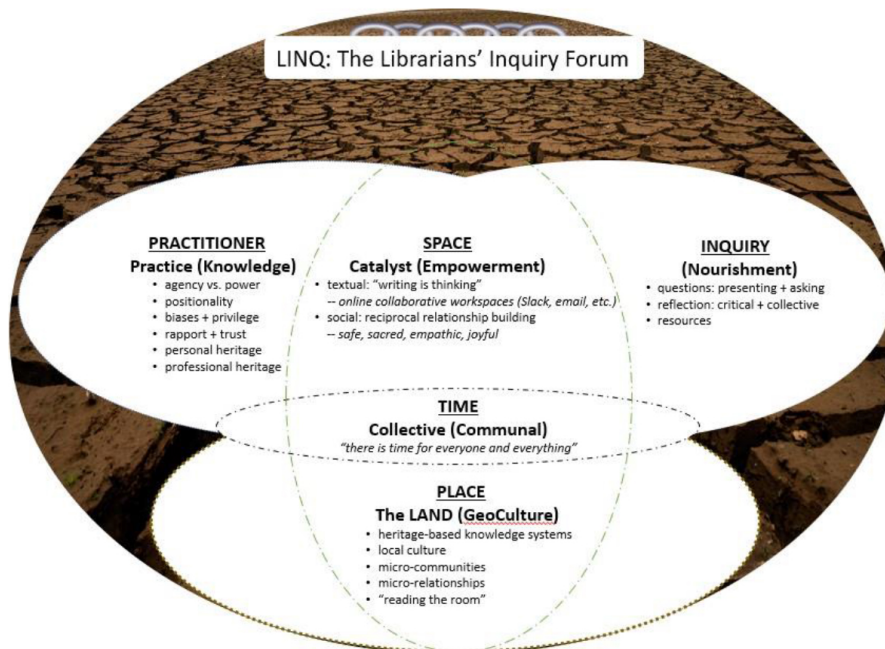
Fig. 1. LINQ conceptual model.

librarianship within a geocultural context. To facilitate the small group ethos of the LINQ model, we distilled lingering questions from the previous LINQ groups (practitioner inquiry is often iterative) into three themes: knowledge, culture, and practice. We chose these themes because the earlier HSPLS group often mentioned these three areas when considering their librarian practices (Irvin et al., 2018).

6. Data analysis

The data from the Gallery Walk was essential to facilitating an overall strategy for planning inquiry-based activities as suggestions for activities for the local hui to engage in between the biannual training sessions. The Gallery Walk activity was important because the first meeting of an inquiry community of practice sets the tone for participants to build relationships in ways they may have never been able to do before. For example, with the Philadelphia Librarians' Group, even though the librarians knew one another culturally as fellow Black librarians, they didn't really *know* one another in terms of values and practices shared (or not) for librarianship. A significant impetus for LIS practitioner inquiry is to build relationships to learn from one another's knowledge and resources. The geographic aspect of a Gallery Walk

Table 2
Gallery Walk responses – hui ʻekolu, training1, August 10, 2018

	Theme	Question	# Responses
Question 1	Knowledge	What do you feel needs to be the focus of hui ʻekolu?	22
Question 2	Practice	What are library and information services (LIS) in Hawaiʻi?	9
Question 3	Culture	How should Hawaiian culture influence librarianship?	19

to establish connection between librarians and the land they share was incredibly important, meaningful, and transformative.

Participant responses to the questions at the Hui ʻEkolu launch event were as follows: The data was photographed, textually compiled, and analyzed in three ways: manually, collaboratively amongst the project staff (principal investigator and graduate research assistant), and via Textalyser.net (http://textalyser.net/) to textually code density, prominence, and frequency of terms and phrases.

7. Question 1 – what do you feel needs to be the focus of hui ʻekolu?

Salient terms from participant responses were "Hawaiian", "culture", and "librarian," with nine mentions for each term throughout the 22 responses. Other terms that were frequently mentioned were "community", "knowledge," and "collaboration/ partnership." Participants also mentioned "respect" and the idea of "preserving" culture. We noticed that "respect" and "preserve" were mentioned in response to each question. Participants also recorded reflections about the expectation of librarians to BE "something" – to be experts in their communities and for librarians to possess localized knowledge.

This repeated reflection raised the concern: what about librarians who are not from the community they serve or who are not Hawaiian, or the neighborhood is not a Hawaiian community? It seems that we, as professionals want, need, and expect ourselves to know our communities and to be involved with our service communities. As information professionals, we recognize the need to *honor the land* by learning and appreciating local history and geocultural knowledge. LINQ brings the space for librarians to collaboratively learn how to be stewards and advocates for honoring the Hawaiian community and culture by the respectful building of collaborations and partnerships. Participant reflections substantiate that geocultural competence is a tenet of the ontological anatomy of "the librarian identity."

8. Question 2 – what is library and information service (LIS) in Hawaiʻi?

The salient terms from the question are "library," "information," "services," and "Hawaii." From 16 participant responses to this question, the main terms of the question were parsed to identify patterns in the data. For example, for the term "library," we correlated responses with "librarians," "libraries," and "librarianship" to

"library." For the term "information," we correlated ten responses for "knowledge" with the five responses that noted the term "information." The term "Hawaii" garnered three responses, and we correlated four responses for "culture" and three responses for "community" with being place-based terms compatible with the term "Hawaii".

The responses to this question indicated a sense of action being called for librarians. There were three responses for "learning" and two responses for "teaching," "service," and "patron." This outcome tells us that librarians understand that people need/want librarians *to be there – ready – present* at a moment's notice. Patrons aren't looking for products from librarians; they are looking for *information*. That information starts as a stance, as an approach.

Of the three questions in the Gallery Walk, this question, Question 2, "What is library and information sciences/services (LIS) in Hawai'i?" was the lowest response question. The nine responses indicated that participants possibly interpreted the question in ways that suggested that they defined terms in socially or culturally specific ways. The low response inspired new questions learned, such as: What are the various ways that participants define "library," "information," and "services"? What relationship do librarians perceive between "library and services" and "library and Hawaii"? Does the low response indicate that the question appealed to LIS students and credentialed librarians but perhaps not to the paraprofessional cultural practitioners?

9. Question 3 – how should Hawaiian culture influence librarianship?

"Culture" along with iterations of "culture", like – "multi-cultural", "cultural", and "cultures", garnered a total of 11 responses. "Hawaiian" garnered ten responses. The concept of "place" was evident in this question, with six responses. Participants noted "place" as context with responses like "place-based knowledge" and having a "place-based lens" to incorporate Hawaiian culture into librarianship. The focus on "place" indicated that many of the answers were Hawaiian-centric. "Librarian" had five mentions, and "community," "learn," and "value" all garnered four responses each. The reflective responses from Question 3 brought forth the consideration: How does a native/Indigenous identity translate into practice? When the local geoculture is centered and honored for social and professional discourse, how does the knowledge of local culture interface with the concept of the library? How does the power and privilege of information/knowledge interface with the local culture? Who has the right to share information about geoculture? What is the sacred information of LIS, in terms of: are there protocols and rights for how LIS is practiced? How are its values shared beyond the LIS community?

The terms "Hawaiian," "culture," "librarian," and "community" were cited in every question of the Gallery Walk. They were also consistently the highest cited responses for each question. "Respect" was mentioned in all three questions indicating a value for collaborating and creating partnerships with the local geoculture, in this case, Hawaiian culture, as the framework for those community connections.

10. Discussion: critical considerations

Practitioner inquiry can be a percolator for emotional labor. Once filled with questions from critical inquiry and fired up with participant reflection, the pot is boiling. Thus, tension and conflict runneth over when questions are learned during inquiry-based community of practice activities. With the LINQ model, as it was applied during each of the LIS inquiry groups, discourse brewed rich outcomes revealing various ways that power and privilege reveal themselves when local geoculture is compatibly centered upon the land on which it is rooted and lives. The Gallery Walk as the activity of the originating event with Hui 'Ekolu demonstrates this tension.

For example, one of the critical observations during the launch event was that non-Hawaiian participants asked for various accommodations during the activity. One participant, "Tori," asked for name tags for everyone. We explained that in a geoculturally-specific space where memory is an essential aspect of connecting heart to heart, we determined that nametags would hinder this natural level of interaction rather than help. The request was repeated as a need. Another participant, "Cari," asked for the hui (group) she was in to be renamed to correspond more readily with her library's location. She acknowledged in her request that she was being "petty" but still wanted this to happen. We learned new critical questions from these requests, such as: What is the agency of mainstream librarians when they are minority participants in a geoculturally-specific space? Non-white librarians are used to walking into mainstream spaces and having to code-switch their language, self-manage their behavioral needs, and contain their personalities. Librarians of color have mastered the methodology of "stick and stay" and "watch and learn" when they are beyond their home communities in geocultural contexts. With these thoughts in mind, our new critical question becomes: Do we accommodate mainstream participants to make them more comfortable within a geocultural space? Or do we honor the context in which we interact, observe, and learn as the geocultural-now-mainstream-context teaches the new minorities how to show up in the space? The Gallery Walk participants' responses allowed us to learn more questions about power, privilege, and justice when the location of mainstream culture is appropriately situated within a geoculturally-specific land, space, and place.

To keep track of the many emerging questions that have continuously flowed since the beginning of the LIS practitioner inquiry model in 2009, a question log was kept where new questions were recorded as they arose. By the end of Hui 'Ekolu in 2021, the LINQ question log totaled 228 questions. Out of that pool, there were five salient questions from the log (meaning the same question came up for each inquiry group, over time):

1) What is "library" in a specific culture located in a specific place? (Notwithstanding administrative structure, how does a library function here as opposed to there?)
2) In what ways is a librarian inquiry group an ecosystem? (How does a LIS practitioner inquiry community of practice become its own geoculture?)

3) In what ways do public library services transpire within a geocultural context?
4) What are the protocols for culturally competent professional practices for public librarians in geocultural-specific places like North Philadelphia, or Westchester, or Hawai'i?
5) What new or renewed practice(s) do librarians gain from this practitioner inquiry research?

These kinds of questions were asked by participants from the four LIS practitioner inquiry communities over time. It is incredible that the same or similar questions were asked by different librarians in different contexts during different time periods. These questions, in their saliency, indicate that public librarians operate in colonized spaces (be it physically or intellectually) where the idea of what a library is becomes a critical consideration when a geocultural worldview is presented.

When we consider centering geographical cultural values within library contexts, we must consider that libraries replicate a Western model of "library" space, place, function, and context (and that library schools teach librarians from this model). The lingering questions listed can be applied to any geocultural context because the geography of every place is specific and unique. The idea of "library" is a local concept based on the norms, languages, traditions, and specific literacy practices of a community (Heath, 1983; Street, 1995; Barton & Hamilton, 2000). LINQ situates public librarians to unpack their own diverse identities (with a clarion call to the majority demographic of white librarians in American LIS) to identify their cultural meeting point (i.e., common humanity) between themselves and the communities they serve. bell hooks (1994) reminds us that when we theorize our lived experiences, be they professional or personal, while also pragmatically reflecting on the theoretical impacts, librarian identity formation and development is at hand. Case in point, hooks elucidates: when our lived experience of theorizing is fundamentally linked to processes of self-recovery, of collective liberation, no gap exists between theory and practice.

Indeed, what such experience makes more evident is the bond between the two – that ultimately reciprocal process wherein one enables the other. Theory is not inherently healing, liberatory, or revolutionary. It fulfills this function only when we ask that it do so and direct our theorizing towards this end. (hooks, 1994, p. 61)

In this vein, LINQ is asking that LIS "do so" and employ practitioner inquiry as a catalyst for public librarian professional development. As a space for centering and privileging librarian's professional narratives for the purpose of "self-recovery and collective liberation" (hooks, 1994, p. 61), LINQ serves as a decolonizing topography for librarian identity and practice (Linklater, 2014).

We're asking big questions here – big questions about: What does it mean to be a librarian within a geocultural context? In what ways does the practice of librarianship within a geocultural context disrupt the – isms ethos of the LIS paradigm? What does professional practice mean for the librarian identity, geoculturally? LINQ is an ongoing inquiry into the study of how theory constructs practice and encourages the journey to resolve such questions learned.

11. Conclusion

This research has illustrated ways that LINQ: The Librarians' Inquiry Forum presents itself as a viable CRT-based model for public librarian professional development. LINQ has the potential to become a sustainable, low-to-no-cost standard for ongoing librarian learning and development in large public library systems. LINQ can be sustainable as an in-house program that keeps public librarians engaged and committed to socially, personally, and ethically challenging the LIS ethos in unconventional and unexpected ways that allows librarians to confront the systemic issues of LIS: power struggles, cultural and ethnic biases, gender-based discriminations, and ableist barriers. The LINQ model, especially when framed around collaborative, reflective practices that honor local geoculture, becomes a setting where librarians can safely and confidentially unpack the nuanced provocations of professional practice via an interactive, collaborative platform for sharing professional experiences, reflecting on challenging and rewarding interactions with the public and researching data from professional practice that serves to inform them of ways in which front line professional practice sets the tone for librarianship as a necessary public good.

This research demonstrated the progression of LINQ through geographies with specific and unique local cultures. The original Librarians' Group was located in two places: Philadelphia, PA, a large urban city, and Westchester County, NY, a suburban enclave north of the Bronx, NY. The HSPLS Inquiry Forum was a statewide community of practice in Hawai'i, with 16 public librarians located across five islands meeting primarily in one place: online. In contrast, the Hui 'Ekolu community was statewide throughout Hawai'i, but participants preferred to meet face-to-face in Honolulu. From urban to suburban, from online to face-to-face, LINQ is a model that complies with the socio-cultural ethos of the geography of a specific community of practice.

Hawai'i was a great teacher for punctuating the point that geoculture is a requisite for LINQ's design as a professional development model. The primary strength of LINQ is its non-hierarchal privileging of local geoculture for each community of practice. In Philadelphia, the group was predominantly Black, and African American culture was front and center in the ways in which the group dynamic flowed. In Westchester, the group was primarily white/European American. Westchester enthusiastically embraced the LINQ model, with participants pivoting their professional practices for positive change for their professional growth. Indeed, the Westchester group asked for a joint session with the Philadelphia forum. Thus, in Spring 2011, the Westchester group drove 2.25 hours south to Philadelphia to have a joint LINQ session. It was at this session that a collective group of about a dozen urban and suburban librarians sitting in the living room of a home located down the street from the "Germantown White House"[12] discovered "the librarian identity" (Irvin, 2021).

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[12]The "Germantown White House" is a historic mansion where President George Washington, the first president of the United States, lived during the summers of 1793 and 1794. Formally called the Deshler-Morris House, it is now a historic museum.

This step was significant because it confirmed that when given the space (time) and place (location) to critically question practice (inquiry), public librarians learn how to identify, reflect, and process their busy professional lives to appreciate the inter-connectedness of their patrons, collections, and themselves, holistically, strategically, and organically. LINQ: The Librarians' Inquiry Forum is an essential professional development model that has proven to be a powerful space for re-igniting librarians' commitment to the mission of their communities, their libraries, their professional identities and practices, and the profession as a whole (Irvin, 2021).

LINQ has the potential to change what professional development for public librarians looks like fundamentally, instead of passively taking classes and attending workshops in locations disconnected from one's work site (e.g., conferences, symposiums, and retreats). With LINQ as the model for LIS practitioner inquiry, librarians can actively engage and reflect on their local practices with immediate outcomes, benefits, and results.

For institutional purposes, LINQ has the potential to impact metrics. For example, public library systems that cannot afford conference funding or time off for their librarians to attend (large systems often rotate conference attendance or sponsor just administrators' attendance), can employ the LINQ model to engage librarians in localized inquiry-based professional development. LINQ could make a case for administrators seeking cost-effective ways to support the professional development of their librarian staff that is inclusive, accessible during work hours and beyond, and immediately effective in professional practice. LINQ: The Librarian's Inquiry Forum promises to be the essential groundwork for an invaluable contribution to twenty-first-century public librarians learning and loving more about the ways in which they "read the room of their work." And lastly, for personal-professional purposes, LINQ has the power to impact public librarians' identity constructs by making it safe to consider critical questions about work that are too often mumbled, gossiped about, and debated behind closed doors. LINQ is a portal through which public librarians can challenge the institutions, governments, and communities they work to better understand the converging forces affecting their professional practice and identity.

Although public librarians help answer questions in their everyday work, it's soul-aching when librarians are too afraid, intimidated, or exhausted to ask questions about their everyday work or even have the opportunity to figure out what those questions are. LINQ recognizes that this fear-based ecology is founded out of an LIS – isms ethos that mimics the – isms milieu of American mainstream society. Confronting LIS's heritage-based – isms ethos is the CRT-based aspect of LINQ's conceptual framework. As seen in the study presented herein, when librarians are asked to confront their own identity constructs to recognize their own human diversity, an interest convergence emerges where all librarians, regardless of heritage or background can mitigate a patriarchal, hegemonic theoretical foundation to weave the common thread of humanity within LIS practice at work in diverse communities. In this vein, LINQ empowers public librarians to share what they know, ask what they do not know, and to take the time to learn new knowledge about themselves as information professionals.

The geoculture of a library and the community where it resides impacts the librarian's identity, whether they know it or like it (or not). LINQ affords librarians the space, place, and questions to identify those impacts on their lifelong learning.

Acknowledgments

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