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## Diverse Book Finders: Diversifying a children's picture book collection by integrating acquisitions into a classroom experience

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**Diverse Book Finders: Diversifying a children's picture book collection by integrating acquisitions into a classroom experience**

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## ABSTRACT

Two recent trends in collection development include finding new ways to bring patron voices into collection development and developing strategies for increasing the diversity and representation within collections. Indiana University Southeast (IU Southeast) Library recently developed a project that combined these two strategic directions by embedding an acquisition experience that used students enrolled in a sophomore block elementary education course to use the Diverse Book Finder (DBF) to select diverse picture books for the IU Southeast collection. While diversification strategies and projects around children's picture book collections in academic libraries are nothing new, IU Southeast's project is unique in its incorporating of students to participate in the selection and diversification of a collection, rather than relying on more traditional strategies driven by librarian or faculty selection. This case study focuses on the design of the project, the integration and embedding of the acquisition project into the education course, how the DBF and its collection were leveraged to enhance the learning experience, and the effect this experience had on the diversity of the Library collection and on the faculty, librarians, and students that were involved.

**Keywords:** patron-driven-acquisitions, PDA, Diverse Book Finder, DBF, children's picture book collection

## INTRODUCTION

Two trends have emerged recently for academic libraries and the acquisition strategies that build their collections: incorporating diversity, equity, and inclusivity (DEI) into collection development and finding more opportunities to engage our users in building our collections (patron-driven acquisitions). Indiana University Southeast (IU Southeast) Library recently developed a project that combined these two strategic directions and embedded an acquisition experience that used students enrolled in a sophomore block elementary education course to select diverse picture books for the Library collection. With the assistance of an institutional DEI grant, the IU Southeast collection and teaching librarians collaborated with education faculty to create a research project that used the Diverse Book Finder (DBF) as a tool to engage students in their understanding of diversity within children's literature, how diversity is represented in library collections, and task them with selecting diverse books for the Library collection. A librarian led instructional session investigated the diversity of the Library's children's picture book collection, diversity within the children's publishing industry, and used the DBF as both a teaching and acquisitions tool that resulted in the student selection of 203 new diverse children's picture book titles for the Library collection. This case study focuses on the design of the project, the integration and embedding of the acquisition project into the education course, how the DBF

and its collection were leveraged to enhance the learning experience, and the effect this experience had on the diversity of the Library collection and on the faculty, librarians, and students that were involved.

### LITERATURE REVIEW

The shift to patron driven acquisition (PDA) strategies in collection development is nothing new. For print materials, libraries have employed demand-driven acquisitions (DDA) and purchase on demand acquisitions (POD). While the definition of these two strategies can vary and sometimes blur or blend, print DDA is commonly used to describe the model of loading records for unowned books into the discovery layer or catalog and allowing users to “purchase” during their natural information seeking and research process. POD acquisition models are usually defined as interlibrary loan purchasing programs and suggested purchase or purchase recommendations from faculty, staff, and students. Both are designed to acquire users demonstrated needs rather than building collections based solely on speculative needs in the form of approval plans or librarian selection. The reasons for this shift in academic library’s print strategies is the result of budget cuts (libraries can no longer collect comprehensively) (Hodges 2010), the rise of facilitated access to collections (consortia borrowing and ILL (Interlibrary Loan)), a greater emphasis on a collection that is used (Tyler 2013), and a collaborative model for collection building that more fully integrates our users into the selection process. PDA models, like DDA and POD, check all these boxes.

One place ripe for the integration of PDA models is the curriculum and children’s literature collections in academic libraries that support teacher education programs and students. Collection development within this area has largely been librarian driven, approval plan driven, and purchase request driven via faculty and students. Academic libraries with dedicated education liaison or subject librarians have benefited from the expertise of these librarians in children’s picture book reviewing, selecting, and their committed work to be at the forefront of understanding diversity within the marketplace and developing strategies for creating a diverse and inclusive collection (Morales, Knowles, and Courg, 2014, Williams and Deyoe, 2015, Warinske, 2016). But, for many libraries that either lack an education librarian or one with the bandwidth for this level of collection development, collection development strategy has not strayed far from patron requests and the purchasing of titles from the multiple awards bestowed upon children’s picture books each year. Individual title selections are usually either selected by liaison librarians or other librarians and staff interested in these collections, via purchase recommendations by students, faculty, and staff and donations (Shipman 2014, Kester 2022, Kogut, 2022, Lehner-Quam 2022). Award winner purchasing has either been done by librarians or by using approval plans that purchase winners and honorees for selected awards. More recently, there has been movement to leverage new tools and practices for building collections more representative of the users of the children’s picture book collections (pre-service learning students and their classrooms) and to make the process of selecting titles for these collections more collaborative.

The most common approach so far to collaborative collection building within children picture book collections has been to bring faculty into the selection process in ways outside of the traditional mechanism of the purchase request. The main methods have been to conduct outreach to education faculty members, consult their course syllabi, look for opportunities to develop partnerships and assignments that use the children's picture book collection, and if possible, collaborate with willing faculty on title selection (Lehner-Quam 2022 and Kester 2022). Lehner-Quam call this "collaborative collection development" and that its power lies in helping "ensure that the collection developed was relevant to the community." (Lehner-Quam 2022) Tools like We Need Diverse Books, and more recently, the Diverse Book Finder (DBF) have provided librarians with instruments in which to focus faculty feedback and collaboration on diverse titles (Lehner-Quam 2022 and Kester 2022).

While We Need Diverse Books has been around for a longer period, it is the DBF that has had the greatest impact so far on both the diversification of children's picture book collections and in the development of divergent acquisitions strategies. The DBF offers two tools to libraries and their children's picture book collections that are unique and do not exist for other subsets of the library collections—an assessment tool to analyze the level of diversity within a collection of titles and a catalog of titles selected and aggregated based on their themes of diversity, representation, and multi-culturalism. Libraries have been eagerly using it to assess and transform their children's picture book collections. The common thread for recent studies using the DBF has been for libraries to start by evaluating the level of diversity within their children's picture book collections by using the DBF Collection Analysis Tool (CAT) and use the CAT generated report to identify potential gaps either based on underrepresentation within a demographic group (Black/African American, Pacific Islander, First/Native Nations, etc.) or within one of the nine themes that the DBF categorizes diverse children's picture books into. (Elrod 2020, Salem 2022 Kester, 2022). Librarians have then proceeded to use the DBF collection as a primary selection tool (Kester, 2022) or suggested pairing the DBF collection and its rich thematic metadata with professional book reviewing sources to identify books that fill collection gaps as outlined by the DBF CAT (Salem 2022). Despite clearly stating on its website that the DBF collection is not a list of recommended titles and that its intention is to collect every book not just the "good" books, it's clear that many libraries do view the DBF collection as both a primary and secondary tool for selection. So far, title selection leveraging these new tools has largely been librarian driven with some faculty input or collaboration. (Lehner-Quam 2022, Kester 2022).

What has been missing so far is work that engages education students--the users of the collection and those the collection's diversity is meant to represent—in the actual purchasing of diverse titles. While the previously mentioned works have incorporated direct and indirect student feedback (Kester, 2022), student surveys (Lehner-Quam 2022), and instructional sessions (Shipman, 2014, Kester, 2022, Lehner-Quam 2022) around children's picture book selection, none have turned selection over to students. While PDA strategies do allow for students to recommend purchases, they do not engage students as selectors--not in the same ways we engage faculty. Despite the lack of integration of student selection for diverse children's picture books, there are other examples of libraries creating new opportunities for students to play a role in

collection development (Heisserer-Miller 2023, Pavenick 2022) and to “engage students...in collection development with intentionality” and to “form relationships and bolster strategic collections” (Heisserer-Miller 2023). The project discussed in this study attempts to do just that and uses the tools of the DBF to engage IU Southeast pre-service learning students on the issues of diversity in classroom libraries, diversity in academic library collections, and ask them to assist the Library in selecting titles to increase the diversity and representation of its children’s picture book collection.

## METHODS

In Spring 2022, IU Southeast librarians became aware of the Diverse Book Finder (DBF) and the use of it by academic libraries to analyze diversity within their children's picture book collections and its potential use as a selection tool to increase the diversity of these collections.

Conversations with the education liaison librarian led to the strategizing of ways to use the DBF to locally do the same. However, instead of using the DBF as a tool for librarian selection, the authors desired to turn this work into a patron driven initiative, specifically one that engaged students in the selection. The timing of these conversations coincided with the availability of an institutional Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) Research Initiative grant for \$2,500. One stipulation of this grant was that its research involve students and the librarians worked with the Coordinator of Elementary Education to turn this initial patron driven purchasing idea into a broader research project.

The resulting grant proposal and project had two aims, both designed around leveraging the DBF. One was to engage with students on the topic of diversity in children’s picture books and discuss their perception of the diversity of collections in academic, public, and school libraries. Next was to evaluate the effect of this engagement on their understanding of diversity in children’s literature, using diverse books in the classroom, and identifying and evaluating diverse picture books for classroom use. Integrating with an existing course that had a curricular component around the use of diverse materials in the classroom an instructional session was designed around the DBF thematic areas, the DBF CAT analysis of IU Southeast diversity data, and students’ perceptions of diversity within the children’s picture book marketplace and libraries. The second aim was to apply principles and practices from the course curriculum and the Library instructional session to the use of the DBF collection and its ease of discovery to allow student to select materials for the Library collection and thereby, play a role in increasing the diversity within the collection. The students’ experience with the instructional session, its learning outcomes, and the purchasing project would be assessed in a pretest and posttest survey. . This project was awarded the DEI grant in April 2022. While the \$2,500 grant funding proved useful, it was really the process and collaboration required to evolve this into a research project that integrated with a Fall 2022 course that proved the greatest value to this initiative.

Connected via the Coordinator of Elementary education, librarians next began collaborating with the instructor of Education 339: Methods for Teaching Language Arts to integrate the instructional session and patron driven purchasing project into the course. This course had a component dedicated specifically to diverse books and an assignment that asked students to

select a diverse picture book, develop a classroom lesson for that picture book, and teach that lesson in their clinical setting. Since the DEI grant required students to be involved in the research, a pretest and posttest survey was developed to gauge student's perceptions on the issues of diversity in children's literature, diversity in library collections, the IU Southeast education program, and based on the nine DBF categories, their ability to evaluate how diversity is represented thematically in children's picture books. Per the study design and IRB, students were not required to take part in the pretest and posttest research or even the selection of children's picture books for the library, but they were required to complete the assignment on identifying and using a diverse book in their clinical setting. Their participation in the study carried no weight toward that assignment nor did their participation in the selection of picture books for the library.

During the second week of the Fall 2022 semester, librarians meet with the EDUC 339 class to describe the project and distribute the pre-test survey to the students. In week four, the EDUC 339 course came to the library for the instructional session designed for this course. Since the DBF was the focal point of both the conversations and learning outcomes around diversity in children's picture books and student selection, the session was designed to immediately ask the students to identify with and engage with the nine DBF thematic categories. Upon entering the classroom, the 27 students were asked to sit according to a pre-assigned DBF category. In advance of the session, the instructor shared the class roster with the librarians, and the twenty-seven students were divided into one of the nine DBF categories (Any Child, Beautiful Life, Biography, Cross Group, Folklore, Incidental, Informational, Oppression & Resilience, Race/Culture Concepts). An active learning activity was created and students were given a children's picture book from the Library collection that was in the DBF collection and categorized in the DBF category that the students had been grouped. Students were then asked to engage with the book, have a conversation with group members about what their DBF category represented, why their book was diverse, and why their book was in their assigned DBF category. After this group discussion, the librarians led a conversation about diversity within children's literature, how selection within libraries often takes place (award winner selection and title by title selection) and using data generated from the DBF Collection Analysis Tool (CAT), how diversity was represented within the Library's children's picture book collection.

The instructional session then turned toward using the DBF as a selection tool and outlined the selection process for the students. After demonstrating the DBF collection and its search interface, students were informed of the parameters of their upcoming assignment which asked them to teach a clinical session using a diverse picture book of their choice. They were then informed that the library was asking them to choose five books from their pre-assigned DBF category. The library would purchase the books and if desired, a book they selected could be used in their clinical assignment. All purchases were to be entered into a shared Google sheet and students were required to include their name, email, book title, and the DBF URL for the books that they select. Duplication rules were set up in the DBF URL column of the Google sheet to highlight any duplicate entry. This was done to ensure each student made five unique selections rather than multiple selections for the same books. The students were given two weeks from the instructional session to make their selections, but most selections were made during the



remaining time within the instructional session. Students were informed that the books they selected would be purchased and that they would be contacted when all their purchases were received and available. To ensure a quick turnaround time, all purchasing was done by Library acquisition staff via Amazon and when the items were received, they were rush cataloged and placed on hold for the students. The project concluded with a post-test survey distributed by the instructor in the final week of the course. The DEI grant was awarded for this project to run in Fall 2022 semester but due to the perceived success of the project and a remaining balance from the \$2500 grant funding, the project was also conducted in the Spring 2023 semester. The Spring 2023 iteration of the project mirrored that of Fall 2022.

### **DBF ASSESSMENT AND IU SOUTHEAST CHILDREN'S PICTURE BOOK COLLECTION**

Since one of the foundations of this project was the engagement of students around the diversity, or lack thereof, of library collections, we started with a baseline assessment, generated by the DBF Collection Analysis Tool, of the Library's children's picture book collection. The DBF CAT generates an assessment based on a user input file of ISBNs and titles, commonly pulled from Library Management Systems or Integrated Library Systems. With an input file of ISBNs and titles, the DBF Collection Analysis Tool analyzes your collection against the DBF collection. It generates a web-based report and a pdf report that provides data on the diversity within your collection (overall diversity), who is represented in your collection (broken down by racial groups), and how they are represented in your collection (how racial groups appear across the nine DBF themes).

Two issues arise for libraries looking to use the DBF CAT. One is that children's picture books often do not have a specific shelving location within education Libraries or children's collections, and this is the case at IU Southeast. Instead, children's picture books are commonly shelved according to their LC call number classification, which can place them across a multitude of LC ranges within the collection. The most common LC classification for children's picture books is the PZ call number range. For IU Southeast to extract a list of ISBNs and titles for assessment with the DBF CAT, the file was filtered by the location of our children's library (CULAB) and the PZs. It is understood that while the greatest percentage of children's picture books are in the PZs, this also excludes many children's picture books from elsewhere within the collection. The second complication to running the DBF CAT assessment is that the DBF collection comprises books published from 2002 to the present, therefore, its ability to accurately evaluate the diversity within a collection can only be done with items from the collection that have also been published during that period. Combining these three filters (location, PZ call number range, and publication date), meant running the DBF CAT against a best guess portion of the library collection that contains children's picture books. This can be seen in the Library data, and the resulting DBF diversity assessments discussed in this study.

Only 26% of titles in the Library's children collection that were classified as PZs were published from 2002-present. This means 5,857 titles were left out of the DBF CAT analysis.

**Table 1: PZs: Age of Children’s Picture Book Collection.**

<b>Publication Years</b>	<b>Titles in PZ</b>	<b>% of collection</b>
1990-1999	3273	41.33%
2002-2009	1575	19.89%
1980-1989	1207	15.24%
1990-2001	501	6.32%
2010-2017	390	4.92%
1979-1970	437	5.52%
1969-1960	210	2.65%
1959-1950	94	1.18%
2018-2022	93	1.17%
2000-2009	54	0.68%
1949-1940	47	0.59%
1939-1930	17	0.21%
1929-1920	9	0.11%
1909-1900	5	0.06%
1919-1910	3	0.04%
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>7915</b>	<b>100.00%</b>

While diversity or BIPOC character representation in children’s picture books has grown slowly since 2012, excluding these titles undoubtedly leaves some diverse titles out of the DBF assessment and affects the accuracy of overall diversity numbers. However, the opposite of that is also true. Since representation in children’s picture books has only begun to increase recently (Kirch 2023), excluding 5,857 titles with little to no diversity increases the percentage of BIPOC or diverse representation in the collection. Either way, the DBF CAT is not a completely accurate assessment of your collection but a useful tool to obtain a baseline of your collection.

To have a baseline to discuss with the EDUC 339 students, the Library evaluated these 2,058 titles with the DBF CAT prior to the start of the Fall 2022 semester.

**Table 2: DBF CAT Assessment, Fall 2022.**

<b>Semester</b>	<b>PZs submitted to DBF</b>	<b>PZs recognized</b>	<b>Items Matched to DBF</b>	<b>BIPOC characters or overall diversity</b>
FALL 2022	2058	2046	144	7.28%

2058 ISBNs or titles were submitted and fifty-seven of these records did not have ISBNs. While the DBF CAT says that it can match on title level data, it did not in this instance and 2001 records were processed in the DBF CATs calculations. In terms of representing the IU Southeast student population, this 7.28% of materials with a BIPOC character fell far below the 18.6% diversity within the student population. (IU Southeast, 2023.) This 7.28 % overall diversity also falls below the 9% BIPOC representation in enrollment in the education program (IU Southeast Communication 2023). Growing the diversity of our children’s book collection and leveraging the students to do so was the next step of the process.

### DBF SELECTION AND PURCHASING

As mentioned previously, despite being awarded the institutional DEI grant for a project for Fall 2022, the participating librarians and faculty decided to run the same project again in Spring 2023. For Fall 2022, 27 (90%) of the thirty enrolled students selected books for the Library and in Spring 2023, 19 (82%) of the twenty-three enrolled students made book selections.

**Table 3: Fall and Spring selections.**

Semester	Students purchasing	Books selected
FALL 2022	27	129
SPRING 2023	19	91
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>220</b>

It is unsure whether the students that did not participate in the selection of books, did so due to missing the instructional session in which most of the ordering occurred or if they simply chose not to participate in selection. For the students that did participate, 85% selected all five titles in both the Fall and Spring semester.

By dividing students into the nine DBF categories, this also ensured that purchasing was spread across these categories and increased the thematic diversity of the representation across the Library collection.

**Table 4: Fall and Spring selections by DBF category.**

DBF Category	FALL 2022 Purchases	SPRING 2023 Purchases	Grand Total
Any Child	18	15	33
Beautiful Life	15	13	28
Oppression & Resilience	15	10	25
Biography	15	10	25
Cross Group	15	10	25
Race/Culture Concepts	12	10	22

Informational	15	7	22
Incidental	15	6	21
Folklore	9	10	19
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>129</b>	<b>91</b>	<b>220</b>

**Table 5: DBF selections by DBF Race/Culture category.**

<b>Race/Culture Category</b>	<b>FALL 2022 selections</b>	<b>SPRING 2023 selections</b>	<b>Grand Total</b>
MULTI-RACIAL CAST	41	32	73
BLACK/AFRICAN AMERICAN	39	23	62
BROWN-SKINNED OR RACE UNSPECIFIED	16	18	34
ASIAN/PACIFIC ISLANDER/ASIAN AMERICAN	17	8	25
LATINX/HISPANIC	4	2	6
BI/MULTIRACIAL/MIXED RACE	4	2	6
FIRST/NATIVE NATIONS	3	3	6
WHITE/EUROPEAN AMERICAN/CAUCASIAN	3	1	4
MIDDLE EASTERN/NORTH AFRICAN	2	2	4
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>129</b>	<b>91</b>	<b>220</b>

While these titles represent selection, they do not represent actual purchasing. In Fall 2022, the library purchased 125 of the students' selected titles, with four titles already owned by the Library. For Spring 2023, the Library purchased 78 of the selected titles. Three titles were already owned and in the Library collection. 10 (11%) of the 91 selected titles were previously selected by EDUC 339 students in the Fall 2022 and already in the collection. In these instances, the titles were pulled and delivered to students in the same manner as purchased titles. In total, 203 of the 220 student selections were purchased with 17 (8%) already being a part of the Library collection.

In terms of increasing the recentness of the Library's children's picture book collection, this purchasing project was successful in boosting that as well.

**Table 6: Publication date of DBF purchases.**

<b>Row Labels</b>	<b>Count of Title</b>
2021	63
2019	41
2020	36
2017	12

2018	9
2015	6
2014	6
2022	5
2016	4
2012	3
2009	3
2013	3
2002	2
2011	2
2008	2
2010	2
2004	2
2000	1
2007	1
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>203</b>

Of these 203 titles, 154 (75%) had a publication date of 2018-2022. Prior to adding these student purchases, titles within this publication year range represented 1.17% of the titles in the PZ call number range within the collection.

### **DBF REASSESSMENT AND IU SOUTHEAST CHILDREN'S PICTURE BOOK COLLECTION**

This project's intention was to engage with students around diversity within children's picture books and library collections and grow the number of thematically diverse materials within the Library collection. In terms of the latter, this project undoubtedly had an effect on the growth of diverse materials within the collection. Since the DBF CAT offered the baseline assessment of diversity, it was used again to track this trajectory. It should be noted again that when rerunning the DBF CAT assessment, only books with the PZ call number range were used. Of the 203 DBF purchases, 133 (66%) were cataloged in the PZ call number range and the other seventy titles were classified in one of thirty-two different LC top line call number ranges. Only the PZs were included in the DBF CAT reassessment. While imperfect, this assessment does provide a glimpse into the growth student selection and purchasing contributed to the collection.

**Table 7: DBF CAT Reassessment of PZs.**

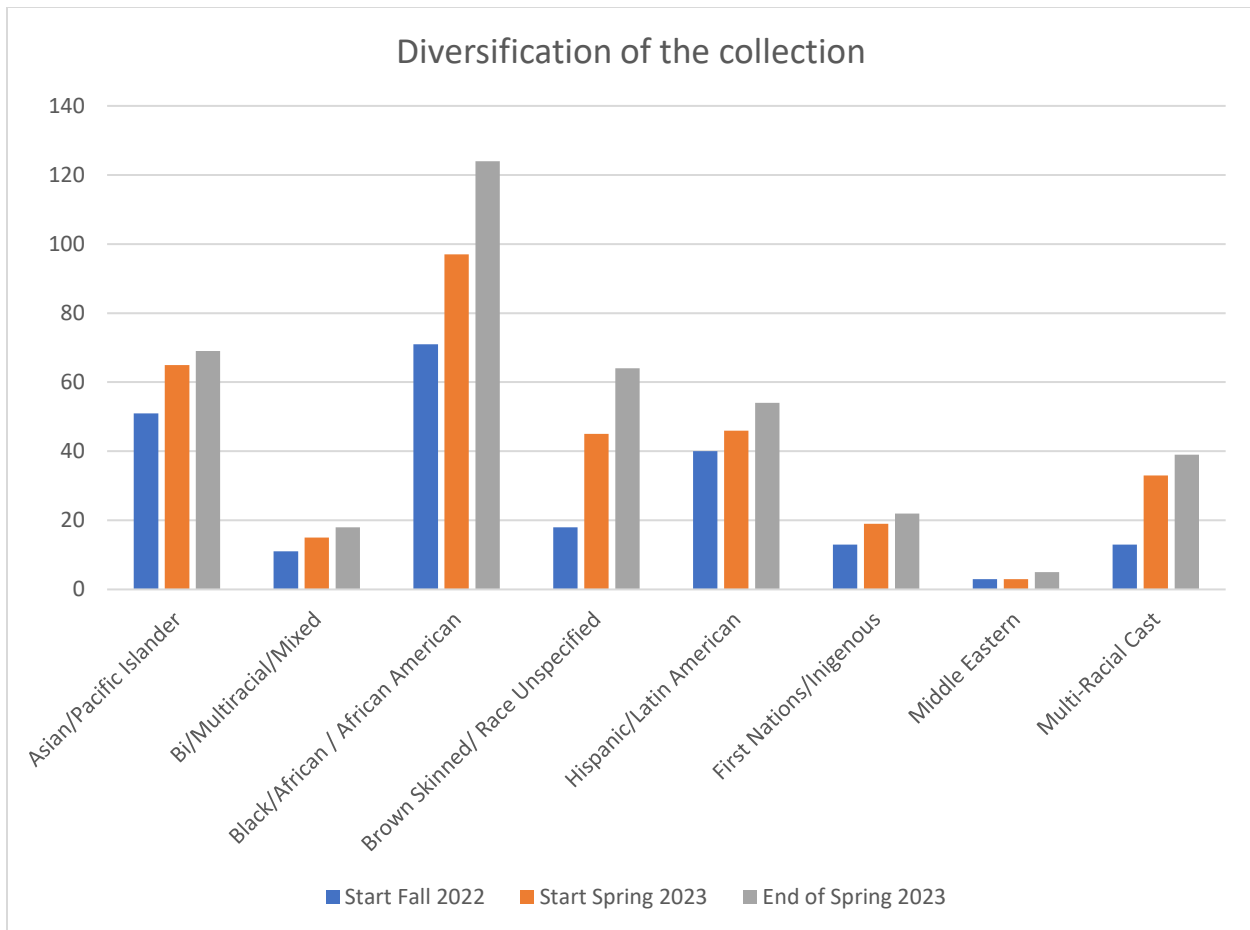
<b>Semester</b>	<b>PZs recognized</b>	<b>Items Matched to DBF</b>	<b>BIPOC characters or overall diversity</b>
Start FALL 2022	2046	144	7.28%
Start SPRING 2023	2438	194	8.24%

End Spring 2023	2564	228	9.16%
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The DBF CAT assessment shows a slight increase in the overall diversity and representation of the Library's children's picture book collection. The minimal increase is affected by several factors. One, as mentioned previously, is that this assessment weighs the PZs and only 66% of EDUC 339 purchases were classified in the PZs. Second, during Fall 2022 and Spring 2023 the Library was processing a major donation of children's materials from a former education faculty member and the bulk of the additions happened during the DBF purchasing. This is evident in the 518 PZs added to the collection during the start of the DBF purchasing (Fall 2022) at the end of the purchasing (End Spring 2023). While these donations undoubtedly provided some diverse materials, the effect of so many materials collected during a time when diversity was not prioritized in publishing means that the effect of the DBD purchasing was weighed down by these donations. Finally, the DBF CAT assessment is ISBN dependent and while the titles submitted to the DBF CAT were cleaned and ISBNs were added for titles that had blank ISBN fields, the ISBNs varied from ten digit to thirteen digit and all 133 DBF purchases were not shown in the data. This can be seen in the increase of items matched by the DBF from Fall to Spring, with only a total of only 84 titles evaluated in the assessment (63% of DBF additions in the PZs).

Despite the deficiencies of the DBF CAT assessment, it still provides a baseline of diversity growth within a collection and a look at the trajectory of which racial groups showed increased representation after the EDUC 339 student selections.

**Figure 8: DBF CAT Reassessment of PZs by race/cultural group.**



The Library's children picture book collection showed a 256% increase for titles representing Brown Skinned/Race Unspecified characters, a 200% increase in titles with a multi-Racial cast of characters, and a 75% increase for titles representing Black/African/African American characters. Overall, all race and cultural categories saw an increase due to the students DBF purchasing.

## **DISCUSSION OF EXPERIENCES**

### ***EDUC 339 Student experience:***

While the Library's children's collection got more current, more diverse, and more representative of IU Southeast education students and the classrooms they teach in, it was not the only beneficiary of this collaborative collection development experience. Students also benefited from the design and experiential learning that took place within this project. Of the 53 students enrolled in the Fall and Spring EDUC 339 course, 13 (n=13 or 25%) completed both the pretest and posttest and provided insight into what experiential learning took place. Since the DBF was used as the foundation for this activity, students were asked questions about their ability to identify books based on the themes of the DBF and students reported an increased comfort in

distinguishing books for each DBF category. Students also reported an increased comfort in identifying, evaluating, and choosing multi-cultural and diverse children's books for classroom use and all thirteen students agreed or strongly agreed that after this experience they were more likely to select and use multi-cultural books for school and classroom libraries. In terms of affecting the selection of the book used in the course clinical assignment, in Fall 2022 five of the seven students reported using a book that they selected for the assignment. In contrast to Fall, in Spring 2023 none of the six students that completed the survey reported using one of their DBF selections in their clinical assignment.

***Library liaison and faculty perspectives:***

In addition to having reflective data on the student experience, the two faculty members and the education subject librarian that participated in this project were also asked to contribute reflections on this experience. The Coordinator of Elementary Education, who assisted in the grant proposal and project design reflected that this project and tools like the DBF complimented and supported existing curriculum designed to prepare students to select quality and appropriate materials for the classroom. They also reflected on the K-12 education landscape and that K-12 learners are increasingly diverse while the teaching population is predominantly white, female, and middle-class. Their recent conversation with local K-12 administrators emphasized the need for newly hired teachers to have skills necessary to support intercultural sensitivity and awareness toward learners, families, and communities. This project provided an experiential boost to the existing and continued direction of IU Southeast elementary education curriculum by supporting pre-service learning elementary education students with tools and an experience using those tools to contribute to the diverse communities that they will matriculate into (Johnson, 2023).

The instructor of the EDUC 339 course reported that one challenge that students had consistently faced in this course was an understanding of diversity within children's picture books. They reflected that students often struggled to explain what made a picture book diverse and identify examples of diverse children's picture books. The teaching faculty member explains this by reflecting that "prior to the collaboration, teacher candidates expressed limited perspectives of the components of diverse picture books." (Williams-Hill 2023) These limitations manifested themselves in the student selections for the assignment. The faculty member went on to explain that prior to the DBF integration, students often selected books with animals rather than human characters or that their choices largely featured historical figures most often represented in stories or situations of oppression or showing resilience against repression. As commented on by the EDUC 339 instructor and made evident in the student pretest and posttest data, leveraging the DBF for this experience produced a greater student understanding around what makes a picture book diverse and the thematic representation of diverse characters within children's picture books (Williams-Hill 2023).

For the education subject librarian that assisted in the design and the delivery of the instructional session, this project created a myriad of feelings. With over twenty plus years of expending intellectual and physical labor to purchase and manage this collection, having it analyzed for its diversity and representation created some apprehension. However, as the subject librarian



reflected, while imperfect, the results of the DBF CAT analysis provided a clear picture of the work that needed to be done to begin the ascent of the Library's children's picture book collection into a more diverse and representative collection. In terms of the student's selection, the subject librarian expressed many of the standard apprehension that librarians have expressed for multiple decades about patron-driven-acquisitions—were the students motivated to select good materials or just any materials to complete the assignment and how “good” or quality were the books that they selected. This project also represented a departure from the traditional library instruction that the subject librarian had typically developed for education classes and asked them to develop activities, lessons, and conversations around diversity and representation that some students might potentially find controversial and contradictory to their worldview. Successful conversations around topics like this often require the development of trust, and familiarity with students that instructional or subject librarians often lack due to their limited face time with a class and potentially, their pedagogical inexperience in leading such conversations and lessons.

### **LIMITATIONS OF STUDY AND FUTURE RESEARCH**

Despite its benefits to the students and the Library collection, this study has several limitations and could benefit from reconceptualization, redesign, and future research. In terms of reconceptualization and redesign, this study treated the DBF as a primary, quality, and authoritative collection tool, despite the DBF acknowledging its attempt to curate all diverse children's picture books, even problematic ones. The DBF identifies these books with a “Questions have been raised about representation in this title” flag applied to individual books. Students would have benefited from having this aspect of the DBF integrated into the instructional session and it could have served as another active learning exercise that engaged students by highlighting a “flagged” book in the DBF collection or by asking them to discover a “flagged” book in their thematic area. Since the DBF links to reviews of the “flagged,” problematic book, students could have discussed the potential troubling representations presented in these books and the potential effect sharing these stories could have on elementary learners. Of the 220 books selected, two (less than 1%) were flagged by the DBF as potentially being problematic in its representation of diversity. Future studies using the DBF as a teaching and selection tool would benefit from talking more thoroughly about the purpose of the DBF collection and potentially pairing the DBF collection with other review and selection sources that would give students a more complete picture of the quality of materials, the reading level of materials, and other metadata often needed for selection, but not included in the DBF.

Asking the students to limit their selections to a pre-defined DBF category, undoubtedly forced students to select books from a category or with themes that they did not intend to use for the clinical assignment portion of the course. This can potentially be viewed in the survey data, where 71% of respondents for the Fall semester reported using one of the books that they selected as a part of the project in their clinical assignment and 0% in Spring. Limiting students to engaging with only a small portion of diverse books available restricted the overall pool of diverse books that they were exposed to and potentially led to less investment from the students

and the review and selection of books for the library collection. However, exposure to more thematic diversity in children's picture book via the DBF categories also meant that students were exposed to categories other than the familiar Oppression and Resilience stories. Regardless of their intention to use the book in the classroom clinical, the pretest and posttest data showed that because of this project, students became more familiar with thematic distinctions and benefited from engaging with and selecting materials from across these categories.

Patron-driven acquisitions are usually embedded in the library discovery layer or other discovery mechanisms and traditionally allow students to discover materials that meet an immediate need, request or access those materials, and, for the most part, remain unaware that the Library purchased the material they wanted. This is the case for traditional purchase on demand (POD), print and electronic book DDA, and streaming PDA. The version of PDA in this project is markedly different in that it asked students affiliated with a course and a specific assignment to make purchases for the library collection. What's not known is how these students approached this purchasing—did they consider the assignment and the classroom they were doing their clinical in? Did they simply select titles that seemed interesting? Did they see this as just another assignment that they simply wanted to complete? —and what long-term effect their selection will have on the library collection. Undoubtedly, the Library's children's picture book collection became newer and more diverse, but did it get better, and did students select materials that future IU-Southeast users will use? Future projects would benefit from running semi-annually or on predetermined cycles rather than in sequential semesters. This would ensure that the collection doesn't become overly saturated with choices from a limited pool of options and that the purchasing can be more thoroughly evaluated between purchasing periods.

In terms of this student purchasing model serving as an alternative to more traditional purchasing models, there are a variety of ways to evaluate this proposition. From the standpoint of collection building and who is better at selecting a quality collection, patron-driven acquisitions have consistently delivered as a mechanism to provide materials that are more likely to get used and see multiple uses over time (Tyler 2013), which can be one definition of quality. On-going assessment of the use of these materials, either by future EDUC 339 students or students, faculty, and community members in general will need to be tracked to have a better understanding on how this purchasing benefited current and future children's picture book users. Another definition of quality would be the selection of quality materials as defined by a book's writing, illustrations, design, and curricular relevance. If awards denote quality, then of the 220 books selected by the students, 17 (9%) were labeled as an award winner by the DBF. More research should be done to evaluate the individual titles selected by students and how these titles stand up to the rigor of a collection "quality" evaluation. While the DBF is an imperfect tool in terms of both analyzing a collection for diversity and as a selection tool for diversifying existing collections, it currently is one of the only tools available to libraries that makes both processes more attainable and efficient to carry out. Despite these imperfections it will continue to be used as an analysis tool and a selection tool by libraries looking to do similar work.

Outside of the actual materials added and how they are evaluated, this project offers many other non-conventional aspects that traditional librarian selection does not offer. One is that this project and future projects like it, open doors for librarians to collaborate with faculty where

previous collaborations may not have existed and to do so by embedding their expertise and services within a course and around a specific assignment. In this instance, education liaison librarians, whose expertise on diversity in children's literature and using diverse materials in classroom settings, goes far beyond collection building, were granted the opportunity to design a research project and instructional lesson leveraging this expertise. Secondly, the faculty involved in this project both reflected that this experience added to student learning and provided students with a better understanding of what a diverse book is, the importance of themes within children's picture books, and how to find diverse books for classroom use and, teaching librarians were partners in this growth in student learning. Finally, engaging students in library service design is the new normal and just as we leverage the expertise of faculty and librarians, we now want to leverage the expertise of students in developing and building these services. Library collections are a service and benefit from student feedback and participation in design in the same way as do library space and remodeling assessments, Library systems and webpage UX testing and design, and other Library assessments involving services and user input.

## CONCLUSION

The project described in this case study can serve as a useful template for other libraries looking to create similar projects or initiatives. While somewhat intentional and somewhat stumbled into, this project represents a perfect confluence of acquisition and DEI initiatives that many libraries are eagerly looking to incorporate into contemporary library services and library engagement models. The IU Southeast Library's DBF project engaged and incorporated student voices into the shaping of a library service, the collection. It deliberately and intentionally used these student voices to increase the representation of a collection that services their needs. Finally, it integrated with course curriculum and learning outcomes to create an enriching experiential learning opportunity for the students, faculty, and the librarians that participated. Unfortunately, tools like the DBF that provide both a diversity assessment of the library collection and a curated collection of diverse materials that can be used to increase the diversity of that collection do not yet exist for other sub-sections of the library collection. Despite that, opportunities to embed acquisitions into courses or create experiential learning experiences from acquisitions do exist for liaison librarians, subject librarians, instructional librarians, and their library collections colleagues.

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