

Sofia Leung
Julia C. Blixrud Scholarship
Personal Statement
May 31, 2016

As as one of few librarians of color at the University of Kansas (KU), I recognize the importance of personal awareness of systemic inequity and how this deeply affects my interactions with colleagues, collaborators, and especially, students. In my current role as the Learning Studio Librarian, I coordinate the student support services in the Learning Studio, develop programs to engage undergraduates, teach critical information literacy, and conduct outreach. Through my work, I make a conscious effort to amplify the voices of students, faculty and staff from underrepresented populations and to ensure that their needs are also being served. For example, in the one year that I have been at KU, I collaborated with the Office of Multicultural Affairs to hold open conversations on topics such as microaggressions on campus, social identities in comic books, and representation in media. I hosted student artwork highlighting the achievements of local black women, created visual book displays to celebrate Black History Month and Gaypril, and advocated for a gender-neutral restroom. More recently, I worked with student organizations and the KU Office of Diversity and Equity to bring a Reflection Room to library space.

Earlier this year, I was asked to co-lead the Libraries' diversity, equity and social justice committee, which has been an amazing opportunity to take a leadership role in incorporating social justice into the Libraries' everyday work. One of my goals is for KU Libraries to be recognized as a site and agent of social justice, to demonstrate that we are actively working to be a more diverse, inclusive environment. Part of this means asking our colleagues to challenge themselves by having difficult conversations with one another, educating themselves through readings and trainings we offer, and ensuring that they remember that social justice is everyone's work. This is demanding but very rewarding work, especially as I see the students who traditionally are forgotten or left out as the ultimate beneficiaries.

Eventually, I hope to move into library administration where I can have a bigger impact on issues such as diversity and inclusion in librarianship. The ARL Fall Forum would allow me to participate in the larger conversation around this topic and how to continue moving the profession as a whole towards being agents of social justice. It would be an honor to attend the ARL Fall Forum in memory of Julia Blixrud, a truly inspiring individual who made so many important contributions to the field.