# Incorporating Marginalized LIS Educators into
# LIS Programs Through Remote Work Options

Gary L. Shaffer[a], Nicole Cooke[b], Africa S. Hands[c], Sandra Hirsh[d], Mega Subramaniam[e]

[a]University of Southern California, United States of America

[b]University of South Carolina, United States of America

[c]University at Buffalo, The State University of New York, United States of America

[d]San José State University, United States of America

[e]University of Maryland, United States of America

gshaffer@usc.edu, ncooke@mailbox.sc.edu, africaha@buffalo.edu, sandy.hirsh@sjsu.edu, mmsubram@umd.edu

**ABSTRACT**

The global pandemic has fundamentally changed the way that people work and learn, and has had a disproportionate impact on Black, Indigenous, and other people of color (BIPOC) (Marcelin, et al., 2021). Throughout the pandemic, all work (including higher education) moved to a fully remote work model. The goal of this panel is to explore the idea of remote work for library and information science (LIS) faculty in the long-term, and particularly discuss the positive implications that this work model could have for those who are BIPOC and/or otherwise marginalized. This is a critical discussion for LIS programs to engage in as the information professions currently face a moment of reckoning and they must work to bring equity for BIPOC colleagues and address the needs of LIS faculty.

Research on private sector knowledge workers who have been working remotely throughout the pandemic found 97% of Black knowledge workers indicate they wish to work in a hybrid or full-time remote working situation compared with 79% of white knowledge workers in the U.S. (Subramanian & Gilbert, 2021). For Black knowledge workers, this may be indicative of the fact that flexible work has reduced the need for "code switching" (Macklin, 2021), reduced instances of microaggressions and discrimination, and improved Black employees' ability to "bounce back" from incidents. Positive factors associated with remote work for Black study participants included greater work/life balance, sense of belonging, management of work stress, and overall work satisfaction (Subramanian & Gilbert, 2021). Similarly, Kurland and Bailey (1999, p. 57) cited the following advantages of remote work for corporate remote workers: "Less time commuting, cost savings, less stress, no need for relocation, comfortable work environment, schedule flexibility, fewer distractions, absence of office politics, workplace fairness, and more autonomy." The flexibility that remote work models provide can also be helpful to other workers, including workers experiencing disabilities (Schur, Ameri, & Kruse, 2020).

On the other hand, challenges for Black workers looking to relocate for work that requires a physical presence in a workplace include the earning gap between Black individuals and whites (Manduca, 2018), lesser intergenerational wealth transfers (Pfeffer & Killewald, 2015), greater preponderance for Black Americans to amass more student loan debt than their white

counterparts (Jackson & Reynolds, 2013), and "a fear of white hostility," (Krysan and Farley 2002, p. 937) for Black Americans should they move into predominantly white neighborhoods, towns, or cities.

Within the context of higher education, and specifically LIS education, it is worth considering what the long-term impacts of the pandemic will be on LIS programs. The delivery modalities for LIS education have been evolving for some time, but the pandemic forced all LIS and iSchools to deliver their programs 100% online. In a study conducted in Pakistan, about the switch from in-person to remote learning brought about by the pandemic, investigators found LIS students, "were motivated to learn online, were receptive to new ideas, learned from their mistakes, and were willing to interact and engage with their fellow students while learning online" (Rafique, Mahmood, Warraich, & Rehman, 2021, p.3). Looking to the future, online delivery is expected to continue in many universities. With increased online education in LIS programs, will LIS faculty have the option to work in a fully remote model? There are pros and cons to this model, as identified by Dali, Caidi, Thompson, and Garner (2021). In considering the impact of the pandemic on academic LIS faculty from three countries, these researchers discussed how the fully remote work model offered benefits like increased scholarly communication virtually with colleagues around the world, and disadvantages such as disruptions to home-life and work-life balance, especially for women.

**Panel Structure and Topics:**
The panel discussion provides an overview of a remote work model that allows faculty to live and work anywhere in the U.S., discusses the barriers and opportunities offered by remote work for LIS faculty and in particular BIPOC LIS faculty members, and identifies solutions to those barriers. Specifically, the panel discusses some of the following questions:

- When considering hybrid or remote work, how might it better benefit BIPOC and other marginalized LIS faculty?
- What are the benefits and challenges to the academic community of having LIS faculty work remotely?
- What does an ideal future look like for LIS faculty in terms of on-campus versus remote/hybrid work for LIS faculty?
- What are the barriers that LIS programs must overcome for hybrid or remote work to take place?

Following the questions and answer phase from each of the panelists, the audience is invited to share their perspectives and experiences.

**PANELISTS:**
- **Nicole Cooke**. Dr. Cooke is the Augusta Baker Endowed Chair and Associate Professor at the University of South Carolina. Her research and teaching interests include human information behavior (particularly in the online context), critical cultural information studies, and diversity and social justice in librarianship. She received the ALISE Excellence in Teaching award in 2019. ncooke@mailbox.sc.edu
- **Africa S. Hands**. Dr. Hands is Assistant Professor of Library Science at the University at Buffalo. Her current research agenda examines public libraries as an information resource

for college-bound patrons and the experiences of first-generation students - both as users of academic libraries and students and professionals in the LIS field. She is past-chair of the Library Research Round Table of ALA. africaha@buffalo.edu

- **Sandra Hirsh**. Dr. Hirsh is Associate Dean for Academics at San José State University. She served as the director of the 100% online SJSU School of Information for ten years, during which time, iSchool faculty had (and continue to have) the option to live anywhere in the United States. She served as ALISE president in 2021-22 and ASIS&T president in 2015. sandy.hirsh@sjsu.edu

- **Mega Subramaniam**. Dr. Subramaniam is Professor and Associate Dean for Faculty at the University of Maryland. She also serves as co-director of the iSchool's Youth Experience Lab. She conducts research on the use of libraries as effective learning environments for the development of digital literacies in non-dominant youth. She serves the ALISE board as Director of Programming. mmsubram@umd.edu

**MODERATOR:**
- **Gary L. Shaffer**. Dr. Shaffer is an Adjunct Professor at the University of Southern California Marshall School of Business. He served as director of the 100% online USC Marshall Master of Management in Library and Information Science (MMLIS) program and director of the USC Libraries Center for Library Leadership and Management prior to scaling back his involvement within the program. gshaffer@usc.edu

**ALISE RESEARCH TAXONOMY TOPICS**
Education programs/schools; online learning; teaching faculty; administration; students.

**AUTHOR KEYWORDS**
LIS education; LIS programs; Remote work; Online education; BIPOC

**REFERENCES**

Dali, K., Caidi, N., Thompson, K.M., & Garner, J. (2021). Tales from three countries and one academic: Academic faculty in the time of the pandemic. *The Library Quarterly: Information, Community, Policy, 91*(4): 371-384.

Jackson, B.A. & Reynolds, J.R. (2013). The price of opportunity: Race, student loan debt, and college achievement. *Sociological Inquiry*, *83*(3), 335-368.

Krysan, M. & Farley, R. (2002). The residential preferences of Blacks: Do they explain persistent segregation? *Social forces*, *80*(3), 937-980.

Kurland, N. & Bailey, D. (1999). The advantages and challenges of working here, there, anywhere, and anytime. *Organizational Dynamics, 28*(2), 53-68.

Macklin, K.A. (2021). *The influence of code-switching on Black women leaders: A phenomenological study* [Doctoral dissertation, Creighton University].

Manduca, R. (2018). Income inequality and the persistence of racial economic disparities. *Sociological Science*, *5*, 182-205.

Marcelin, J.R., Swartz, T.H., Bernice, F., Berthaud, V., & Christian, R., Infectious Diseases Society of America. (2021). Addressing and inspiring vaccine confidence in Black, Indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC) during the COVID-19 pandemic. In *Open Forum Infectious Diseases 8*(9).

Pfeffer, F.T. & Killewald, A. (2015). How rigid is the wealth structure and why? Inter-and multigenerational associations in family wealth. *Population Studies Center Research Report*, 15-845.

Rafique, G.M., Mahmood, K., Warraich, N.F., & Rehman, S.U. (2021). Readiness for Online Learning during COVID-19 pandemic: A survey of Pakistani LIS students. *The Journal of Academic Librarianship, 47*(3), 102346.

Schur, L.A., Ameri, M., & Kruse, D. (2020). Telework after COVID: a "silver lining" for workers with disabilities? *Journal of occupational rehabilitation*, *30*(4), 521-536.

Subramanian, S. & Gilbert, T. (2021, March 11). A new era of workplace inclusion: Moving from retrofit to redesign. *Futureform.* https://futureforum.com/2021/03/11/dismantling-the-office-moving-from-retrofit-to-redesign