

How are Archives-Related Agencies in the United States Representing “Social Justice” on their Websites Based on Political Leaning of the 50 States? An Exploratory Content Analysis to Discern Propositions for Archival Education

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ABSTRACT

Contemporary archives-related agencies in the United States increasingly recognize the entrenched reality of archival work that has historically stayed privileged and biased while representing a semblance of neutrality (Society of American Archivists, 2020). Hence, today many call for rectifying the lapses of the past and a need to center social justice in their special collections, illustrated in a recent emergence of community archives, preservation literacy programs, community archives consulting programs, and co-stewardship efforts (Caswell et al., 2017; Caswell, Cifor, & Ramirez, 2016; Flinn, Stevens, & Shepherd, 2009; Liew, Goulding, & Nichol, 2020). How are major state archives-related agencies representing “social justice” on their websites to reflect this mandate and what its correlation with the political leaning of the state based on the national political elections since 2000? This qualitative evaluation explores answers in its application of website content analysis of seven information offerings in three categories that include (Mehra & Davis, 2015): information sources (collections, resources), information policy and planning (assigned role, strategic representation), and connections (internal, external, news and events). Mapping a taxonomy of social justice representations with illustrative promising practices and case examples are of value to archives-related agencies and others struggling with finding relevant and effective “how to’s” of operationalizing social justice actions during current politically turbulent times in ways that are deliberates, systematic, action-oriented, and community-engaged (Mehra, 2022). Implications of discerning propositions for archival education are also identified to bridge gaps between teaching, practice, social justice, impact, and political actions (Mehra & Winberry, 2021).

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ALISE RESEARCH TAXONOMY TOPICS

Archives; Social justice; Special libraries; Taxonomies.

AUTHOR KEYWORDS

archival education; exploratory website content analysis; political propositions; qualitative evaluation

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