

Integrating Immigrants into the US LIS Profession: Findings from a Pilot Collaborative Project

Ana Ndumu

College of Information Studies, University of Maryland, College Park, Maryland, United States

Michele A. L. Villagran

School of Information, San José State University, San José, California, United States

Vilma Sandoval-Sall

Anne Arundel County Public Library, Annapolis, Maryland, United States

Kirsten Grunberg

Prince George's County Memorial Library System, Largo, Maryland, United States

Laura Tadena

Austin Public Library, Austin, Texas, United States

Roman Santillan

Montgomery County Public Libraries, Rockville, Maryland, United States

N. Yasmin Bromir

Frederick County Public Libraries, Frederick, Maryland, United States

Immigrants are essential library constituents. This article presents the outcomes of a pilot, self-paced mini-course to introduce US immigrants to the library and information science (LIS) field. Data from student assessment and focus groups suggest that, with curricular and design improvements, the mini-course can help recruit skilled or degreed immigrants to the LIS profession. The Careers in Libraries for Immigrants project can serve as a model for justice-oriented partnerships among community members, educators, and professionals.

Keywords: equity, diversity, and inclusion, immigrants, recruitment, US LIS education

US library service to immigrants dates back nearly to the foundations of library professionalization and the establishment of the American Library Association (Jones, 1999). Since the late nineteenth century, outreach to immigrant communities has been firmly entrenched in library work, though, on the whole, the range and scope of immigrant-related public library programs have remained unchanged (Ndumu, 2021). Much of the library–immigrant connection involves meeting integration needs through language instruction, citizenship assistance, and workforce development specifically for adult patrons. Despite the considerable attention granted to how libraries serve asylees, refugees, and

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KEY POINTS:

- The library and information science field is a career option for skilled immigrants with professional or information experience.
- The self-paced mini-course approach holds promise for introducing immigrants to career paths in librarianship.
- Additional support such as mentorship, shadowing opportunities, funding, and association membership can enrich the self-paced mini-course experience.

other immigrants, few resources address how the field can present librarianship as a viable transitional career for those who permanently relocate to the United States. Paradoxically, migrants have contributed greatly to US librarianship. Several historic library leaders—Pura Belpre and Arturo Schomburg, for example—were themselves newcomers to the mainland U.S. (Belpre & Sanchez-Gonzalez, 2013; Valdes, 2018). Their influences throughout the early twentieth century shaped the profession and extended opportunities in libraries and library work for people of color.

Questions regarding immigrant librarians' experiences and exclusive support for immigrants to pursue careers in librarianship inspired a collaboration among the Education Committee of the National Association to Promote Library and Information Services to Latinos and the Spanish-Speaking (REFORMA) together with the REFORMA Mid-Atlantic Chapter, the Prince George's County (Maryland) Library System, and the Montgomery County (Maryland) Public Library System. The goal of the Careers in Libraries for Immigrants (CIL) collaborative project was to engage with asylees, refugees, and other immigrants to explore occupational opportunities in librarianship. Funding from an Association for Library and Information Science Education (ALISE) Community Conn@CT mini-grant supported the development and piloting of an online self-paced mini-course geared toward highly skilled immigrants. CIL project participants additionally observed and conversed with librarians through shadowing opportunities, with those who completed the mini-course receiving stipends, certificates, and complementary REFORMA memberships. This article describes CIL project's development, testing, and findings, as well as the initiative's potential to serve as a model for progressive community action within the library and information science (LIS) field.

Literature review/Problem statement

Although there is significant international scholarship on immigrant information behavior (Caidi et al., 2010; Oduntan & Ruthven, 2019) and library work involving specific immigrant groups (Fisher et al., 2004; Su & Connaway, 1995), there is comparably little known about the experiences of immigrants within librarianship. In the United States, as in many other countries, immigration is a source of rich national pride yet divisive political demagoguery. Xenophobia and anti-immigrant rhetoric have been part of the US story since its founding (Ndumu, 2020). National sentiments and policies around immigration encompass libraries, which has prompted a growing number of librarians to respond to immigration controversies. During the 2019 ALA Annual Meeting held in Washington, D.C., librarians marched in condemnation of then-President Trump's family separation policy (Sullivan, 2019). After

more than six years of librarians' advocacy to eradicate the "illegal alien" Library of Congress subject heading (George et al., 2021; Gross & Baron, 2020), a change to "undocumented immigrant" finally occurred on November 12, 2021 (ALA, 2021), though a number of library workers denounced the additional, separate subject heading of "illegal immigration."

As the LIS field ponders deeper ways of advocating on behalf of immigrants, there must be new mechanisms for including diverse immigrant groups throughout various aspects of the profession, including the LIS workforce. The ways in which the LIS field frames immigrant and international communities as information dispossessed points to a broader professional problem of remarkably few substantive or substantiated examinations that account for a range of immigrant experiences, as several LIS researchers and leaders have noted (Ndumu, 2020; Srinivasan & Pyati, 2007). More specifically, our field needs evidence of underemployed immigrants' professional realities upon relocating to the United States. Armed with this insight, librarians and library educators might generate adequate support for those navigating post-migration career development.

In the US LIS context, highly skilled, professional, or college-educated immigrants are frequently conflated with international students, a group that, by definition, is seeking professional or career development. The solid body of LIS research on international students in US academic libraries suggests there exists considerable library instruction and resources geared toward this segment of newcomers (Baron & Strout-Dapaz, 2001; Natowitz, 1995; Peters, 2010). However, the US Citizenship and Immigration Services categorizes international students not as immigrants but as temporary visitors. Within LIS, this group is regularly presented as "flat, non-evolving characters, continually laboring under the weight of linguistic, cultural, and technological disadvantages, as they try to acquire an American education" (Conteh-Morgan, 2003, p. 202). In reality, international students contribute to the "brain gain" that characterizes mass professional worker entry into countries like Australia, Canada, the United Kingdom, and the United States. LIS research all but acknowledges that international students in fact enter with and into significant information capital. How much longer, then, must the LIS field discount the capacity of highly skilled or degreed but *non-student* newcomers, including those who might pursue librarianship itself? There are relatively no investigations into programs or mechanisms for welcoming prospective librarians from immigrant backgrounds into Master's in Library and Information Science programs. While many LIS diversity initiatives address the needs of immigrants, they do not effectively address the professional recruitment or integration of immigrant librarians.

What amounts to a gap in knowledge and practice is reminiscent of what Poole et al. (2021) identify as the "vexing paradox" of LIS instruction: avowed commitments to diversity have not resulted in a truly diverse LIS profession in the United States (p. 258). Jaeger et al. (2015), along with Adkins et al. (2021), posit that a compound effect, or the "virtuous circle model," occurs when LIS leaders strategically make room for diverse groups within LIS education. Examples of successful LIS pipeline efforts include the University of North Carolina at Greensboro's Academic and Cultural Enrichment (ACE) Scholars Program designed to support socio-economically, racially, and ethnically diverse students to succeed in the LIS profession (Croxtton et al., 2016). Monteil-Overall and Littletree (2015) similarly describe the University of Arizona School of Information Resources and Library Science's

Knowledge River (KR) program to increase the number of Indigenous and Latinx librarians. Knowledge River combines LIS instruction with real-world library experience and same-heritage mentoring (p. 67) and presents a template for other LIS education efforts. The ALA Spectrum Scholarship program has helped educate more than 1,300 MLIS students of color, while the adjacent ALA Spectrum Doctoral Fellowship is credited with training dozens of LIS faculty of color (ALA, 2022). In similar fashion, a program geared toward creating a pipeline of immigrant library professionals can center on community, identity, and affinity, emphasizing curricula constructed around participant realities.

It is well established that LIS professionals should assist with immigrant integration into “unfamiliar information landscapes,” as Kosciejew (2019, p. 79) puts it, but professional or highly skilled immigrants are seldom considered (Abdi et al., 2019; Shuva, 2021), nor are they seen as the category of newcomers for whom public institutions’ “social improvement agendas” (Labadi, 2017) are relevant, suggesting problematic perceptions of social and labor capital. Highly skilled or degreed immigrants face other structural or systemic barriers whereby they are not seen as workforce-ready; many are omitted and disregarded (Mabi, 2020; Muthui, 2012; World Education Services, 2016).

Social science scholarship can perhaps illuminate aspects of these LIS dynamics. Human capital theory, which “presumes that skill-accredited immigrant professionals” can secure employment based on their skills and qualifications alone, negates how and why highly skilled immigrants are discounted in many US sectors. For example, Painter and Sanderson (2017) employed human capital theory to explore whether “immigrants should be able to use their industry-specific knowledge, skills, and abilities acquired in Mexico within the same industry in the United States” (p. 212). Their findings demonstrate the types of limitations that highly skilled immigrants encounter. Van Tubergen et al. (2004) believe that “the economic status of immigrants may be affected by the country from which they come (‘origin effect’), the country to which they migrate (‘destination effect’), and the specific relations between origins and destinations (‘community effect’).” The authors further conclude that “differences associated with political oppression in the countries of origin, relative income inequality, and geographic distance affect the labor force status of immigrants” (p. 704). Almeida et al. (2015) believe that immigrants are often hired (or not hired) due to biased employment practices. The challenges faced by skilled immigrants can result in a phenomenon dubbed “brain waste,” whereby “those whose overseas qualifications and work experience are not recognized in host countries often experience skill wastage and atrophy and exploitation” (Cameron et al., 2019, p. 80). Syed (2008) believes that “the customary human capital narrative of skilled migrants’ success story, which is based on their comparison with unskilled migrants, must be expanded to take into account the interrelated and interdependent multilevel challenges skilled migrants face in the host labor market” (p. 28).

Mainstream society’s underestimation of immigrants poses harm, and this form of marginalization spans beyond the US workforce. Somerville and Walsworth (2010) investigated the experiences of skilled immigrants seeking work in Canada; they noted that “migrants experience employment frustrations stemming directly from the discrepancy between admission criteria (foreign education and work experience) and employment criteria

(Canadian education and work experience)” (p. 341). [Clemens \(2016\)](#) examined the “Lump of Learning model,” which links the value of skilled-immigrant education and experience to human capital theory (p. 1227). [Marginson \(2019\)](#) considers human capital theory to be an outdated construct that assumes “that intellectual formation constitutes a mode of economic capital, higher education is preparation for work, and primarily education (not social background) determines graduate outcomes” (p. 460). Marginson believes that additional factors such as income inequality, status, and productivity must be considered when evaluating professional skills. [Almeida and Fernando \(2017\)](#) consider that immigrant skills continue to be “underutilized” in Australia (p. 880), while [Liversage \(2009\)](#) posited “the labor market incorporation of high-skilled immigrants is of key concern to receiving societies and migrating individuals alike” (p. 203) and notes that immigrants follow distinctly different paths, including “ascent,” “re-education,” and “marginalization.”

It follows, then, that highly skilled immigrants all over the world face a problem of professional integration. In the United States, the LIS field is precisely positioned to address this inequity, yet it has not truly seen immigrants as potential colleagues, and the MLIS degree presents an additional barrier to entry, which parallels [Campbell-Meier and Hussey’s \(2019\)](#) conclusion that LIS professional entrance is nebulous. As an example, [Dali and Dilevko \(2007\)](#) describe that “despite demonstrated credentials [and] vast subject experience,” immigrants from Eastern Europe and Russia “face numerous challenges while trying to gain work as professional librarians in Canada” (p. 77). The authors proposed a retraining model that does not require additional coursework or degrees from the host country. It can be said that immigrants comprise a vibrant but overlooked group of current and future librarians.

Rather than affording greater flexibility such as modified requirements in the case of LIS-skilled immigrants, the field is thought to be unyielding and exacting. Specifically, credentialing poses an impediment for those seeking to pursue librarianship in the United States. To this, [Mehra \(2021\)](#) states that a “professional cultural inertia of discarding outdated concepts” has impeded social justice and inclusion efforts. Outdated concepts are valid to consider and perhaps critique when focusing on avenues for recruiting and supporting immigrants and others whom the LIS field has historically excluded. Mehra’s recommendations for “community-immersive instruction” and “theory-practice-impact discourse” (p. 460) are conducive to ideating LIS instruction for highly skilled or degreed immigrants. Even further, white-racialized or Anglo-conformist notions of US LIS professionalization can pose barriers to immigrant librarians’ sense of belonging, as is echoed by [Espinal et al. \(2018\)](#), who argue that the LIS profession must “decenter whiteness” and “diversify the ranks of librarians through bold initiatives, significantly increasing the numbers of librarians of color” (p. 147).

In this vein, REFORMA initiated a collaborative project to introduce immigrants to the LIS profession. The CILI project is a continuation of REFORMA’s work involving immigrant rights. Other REFORMA endeavors include the Children in Crisis Project to provide reading and learning material for children at the border. The goal of attracting and supporting immigrant librarians is in keeping with the REFORMA mission; it served as the rationale for the Careers in Libraries for Immigrants program.

Methods

The CILI project team employed various educational elements aimed at exploring the effectiveness of the pilot mini-course to introduce adult immigrants to the US LIS profession. Given the emphasis on enfranchisement, the team borrowed from both the constructivist paradigm and the care ethical framework. Constructivist learning holds that learners create meaning for themselves, and, when paired with technology, it can foster active and personalized knowledge-building (Jonassen et al., 1999). Care through attentiveness to participant agency was, therefore, germane to the project. Course lessons harnessed participants' personal knowledge; in turn, each lesson scaffolded subsequent learning. To foster engagement and co-ownership of the pilot mini-course, the program included an orientation, closing ceremony, and shadowing experience with a librarian.

Data-collection methods comprised formative assessment through module activities, summative assessment through pre- and post-test evaluation, and qualitative program assessment in the form of open-ended participation evaluations. A multimethod scheme allowed the project team to gauge learning outcome mastery and participant experience, coinciding with the project's emphasis on constructivist knowledge-building and care-based community learning. The team applied inferential statistical analysis and qualitative content analysis to interpret findings. Specific course and evaluative elements are described in the following sections.

Mini-course design and delivery

An online, self-paced mini-course design facilitated guided learning that is suitable to a range of participant time availability and technological skills. Online tutorials or mini-courses are thought to foster meaningful, independent learning to center self-direction for library learners (Silver & Nickel, 2005); they might also yield benefits for those exploring the LIS profession. By virtue of its recent technological initiatives (Villa-Nicholas, 2015), REFORMA stood out as an organization that can carry out an online mini-course to promote librarianship to immigrants.

The research team developed the curriculum by brainstorming on the most viable content. They primarily drew from their experiences as library professionals of immigrant backgrounds who serve immigrants. Ideation took place during existing REFORMA Education Committee meetings that culminated in curricular concept mapping using Google Jamboard, as seen in Figure 1.

Based on prevalent themes, the research team then divided into pairs to structure the curriculum into four learning modules: (1) Introduction to the Library Profession; (2) Working in Different Types of Libraries; (3) Opportunities to Gain Experience; and (4) Funding Your Education. The pairs assembled and recorded 10- to 20-minute modular lessons that included short activities or formative assessments. Examples of activities include short writing assignments based on review prompts (Figure 2) and a career-matching quiz. The modules also included dozens of additional resources on obtaining financial aid, exploring MLIS programs, and more.

Upon completion, participants would be paired with librarians for one-hour virtual shadowing experiences to gain a behind-the-scenes library tour and a first-hand librarian

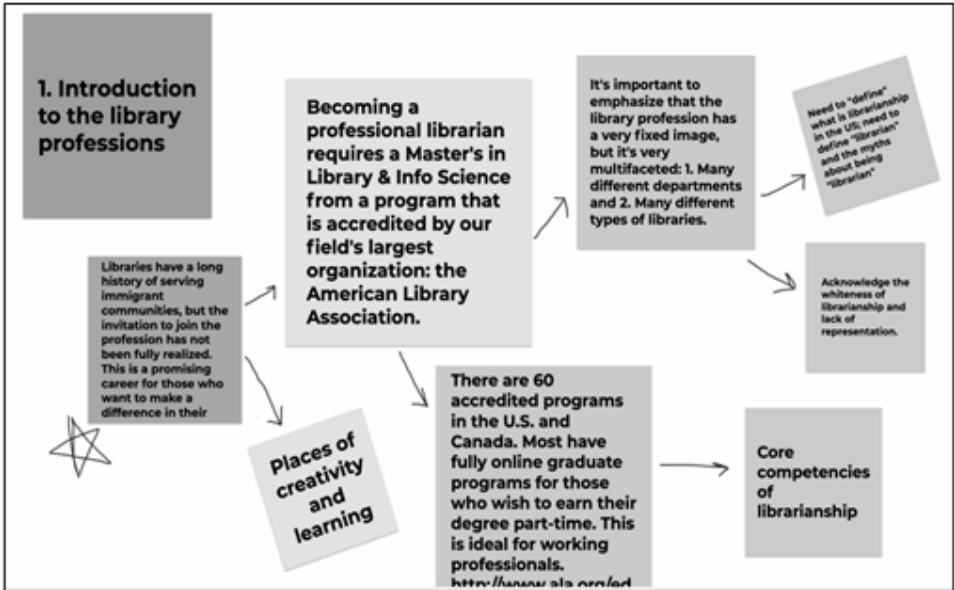


Figure 1: Mini-course concept map
Source: Authors' illustration

account. The mini-course design then called for a closing ceremony followed by, finally, an open-ended program evaluation.

Language translation was an important aspect of the CILI team's conceptual process. The team prioritized potential learners in southern Maryland with a focus on Montgomery



MODULE 3

ACTIVITY

C.I.L.I.
CAREERS IN LIBRARIANSHIP
FOR IMMIGRANTS

Review what you've learned in the lesson.
List some ways that you can gain experience in libraries.

Figure 2: Sample mini-course assignment
Source: Authors' illustration

and Prince George's counties. Using census data on southern Maryland's immigrant population, the research team decided to translate the course into Spanish to serve Hispanic groups and Amharic to serve Ethiopian community members. REFORMA's Translation Committee translated the initial English language course into Spanish, while an Ethiopian non-profit organization translated the mini-course into Amharic.

Next, the pairs explored learning management systems (LMS) such as Google Classroom, Canvas, Nearpod, and Moodle and later presented to the entire project team on a system's functions, strengths, and limitations. Since the project team had already adopted Google Suite throughout the project (i.e., Jamboard, Docs, Shared Drive, Sheets, Slides, and, later, a dedicated Gmail account), Google Classroom emerged as the most efficient and interoperable LMS. Curricular development spanned two months, and the project team then customized and standardized the learning content within Google Classroom.

Mini-course marketing

The project team created a dedicated website to promote the CILI mini-course and recruited participants beginning in June 2021 through the REFORMA listserv in addition to other National Association of Librarians of Color (NALCOs) listservs such as those of the Black Caucus of ALA (BCALA), the American Indian Library Association (AILA), the Chinese American Library Association (CALA), and the Asian and Pacific Island Library Association (APALA). Marketing material (Figure 3) was also distributed through the Association for LIS Education (ALISE) and American Library Association channels, including the Office for Diversity, Literacy, and Outreach Services (ODLOS) and its sub-committee on Serving Immigrants, Refugees, and Displaced Persons (SRIDP), the Social Responsibilities Roundtable (SRRT), and the Ethnic, Multicultural and International Exchange Roundtable (EMIERT) and REFORMA's social media platforms. Most importantly, the team shared the CILI mini-course with Maryland-based community partners such as Solutions in Hometown Connections, International Rescue Committee, Employ Prince George, the Abren Enhun Ethiopian Support Association, and the Pro Bono Resource Center of Maryland.

Participant rights and participatory ethics

Immigrant groups are susceptible to research exploitation and misrepresentation (Bell et al., 2010). Studies involving immigrant groups must take into account vulnerabilities and mitigate potential harm. Therefore, the CILI project was intended to advance, not hinder, immigration integration and well-being. The project team explained that participation was voluntary and that those who opted in had the right to stop taking part at any point in the study. Registrants received verbal and written explanations about the project before and during the orientation, and there was specific time set aside to answer questions about consent, data use, purpose, incentives, or any other aspect of the study. All participants consented. The project team took measures to protect participant privacy by first using password-secured tools to protect identifiable information and, second, adhering to anonymity by withholding the participants' name, city, and date of birth identifiers from all reporting and presenting. Participants were not asked about immigration status, and they also received assurance that the study had no bearing on their immigration or any other government

Seeking participants for a mini-course on Careers in Librarianship for Immigrants

The REFORMA Education Committee & Mid-Atlantic Chapter in partnership with the Prince George's County Memorial Library System & Montgomery County Library System are pleased to offer a course designed to welcome adult immigrants to the library workforce.

The online CILI program offers:

- Self-paced lessons
- Short modules & activities
- Language translation
- A behind-the-scenes library tour
- And participant stipends

To sign up or for more information, email careersinlibraries@gmail.com by June 21

REFORMA.org/CILIProgram

Figure 3: Marketing material
Source: Authors' illustration

proceeding, if applicable. They were also presented with opportunities to benefit from the project through incentives and REFORMA membership and, if interested, ongoing LIS career guidance. For example, one participant requested a library employment reference a few months after matriculating through the course.

Findings

Fifteen people expressed interest in the CILI mini-course, and ten participants registered. Registrants indicated various immigrant backgrounds, with the majority identifying as Central American. Despite the program's substantial connections to Maryland-based immigrant communities and public library systems, registrants resided in five different states—Colorado, Texas, California, New Jersey, and Maryland—and spoke two or more languages, as demonstrated by the demographics captured in [Table 1](#), [Figure 4](#), and [Figure 5](#).

Table 1: Registrant languages

Languages spoken	<i>n</i>	# of languages spoken	<i>n</i>
English	10	monolingual	0
Spanish	7	bilingual	8
French	1	trilingual	3
Kurdish	1	multilingual	4
Fari/Persian	1		

Six of the ten registrants completed the mini-course, the requisite shadowing, and closing ceremony activities, thus amounting to a 40% program attrition rate. Table 2 indicates participants' demographics. Though the mini-course was available in English, Spanish, Amharic, and other languages upon request, participants requested only Spanish translation. Participants completed the module activities within three weeks on average. They then engaged with librarians for either one-on-one or paired online shadowing opportunities.

Regarding the CILI program's effectiveness in introducing immigrants to the US library profession, course data supports that students adequately learned the course content. Pre-test ($M = 4.33$; $SD = 1.03$) and post-test ($M = 5.50$; $SD = 0.84$) comparisons revealed significant increases in scores, $t(6) = 3.80$, $p = 0.0127$, as noted in Table 3.

Participants' responses to module course activities afforded deeper insight into their attainment throughout the mini-course. Module 1 asked participants a pair of questions—

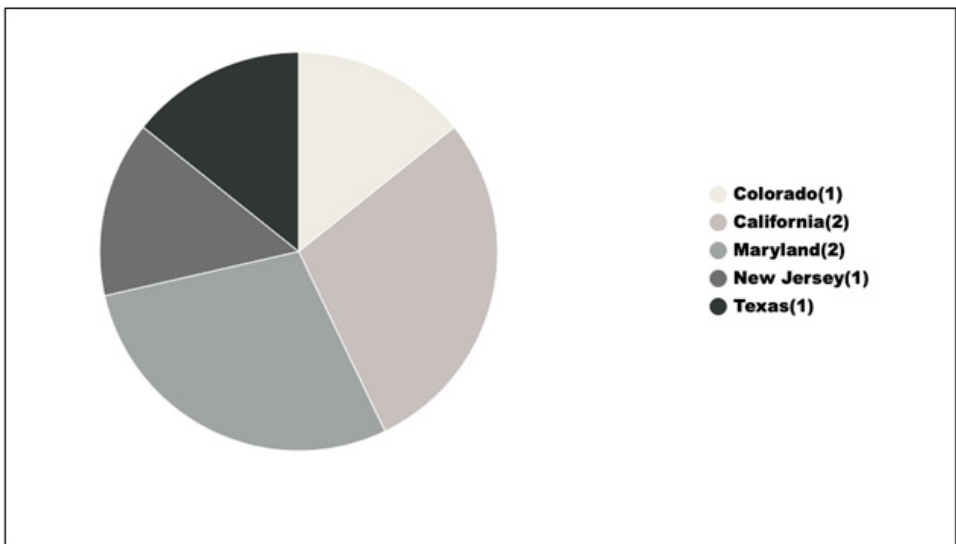


Figure 4: Registrants—US states
Source: Authors' illustration

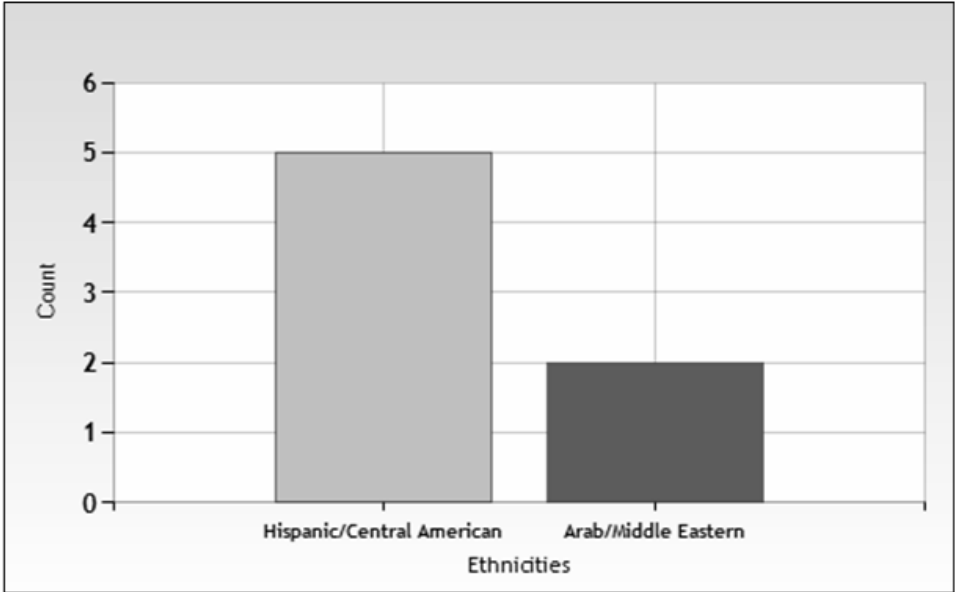


Figure 5: Registrants—Race/ethnicity
Source: Authors' illustration

“Based on what you’ve learned in this module, what are the competencies and characteristics required to become a librarian in the United States?” and “What characteristics do you feel you have that would fit this career?”—which elicited information on participants’

Table 2: Registrants’ demographics

Participant ID	Years in US	Country of origin	State of residence	Pre-migration employment	Current employment	Requested course language
A	10	Turkey	Texas	Art lecturer	Unemployed	English
B	7	Panama	Texas	Accountant	Accounting assistant	English
C	1	Venezuela	Maryland	Librarian	Library assistant	Spanish
D	5	Honduras	Maryland	Daycare teacher	Daycare teacher	Spanish
E	20	Guatemala	California	Administrative clerk	N/A (underaged)	English
F ^a	2	Iran	California	Professor	Unemployed	English

^aThis participant had returned to their birth country and was preparing for second migration to the United States at the time of the CILI program.

Table 3: Participants' pre- and post-test results

Group	Pre-test	Post-test
<i>n</i>	6	6
<i>M</i>	4.33	5.50
<i>SD</i>	1.03	0.84
<i>SEM</i>	0.42	0.32

interpretations of the credentialing requirements as well as their educational backgrounds and personal interests. Participant A, a former art lecturer, described her previous US college experience: “My high school education and two years of college education were conservation (historical preservation) and we did book repair and binding. That’s why I can say archiving, protecting, researching, learning new things, sharing what you have learned with others, helping when needed.” Participant C, a Venezuelan librarian with 27 years of experience, wrote in Spanish, “Me encantan las personas, amo ayudar, me encanta buscar información, y me encanta apoyar a las personas en su formación [I enjoy people, helping, searching for information, and supporting people develop].” Providing assistance and public service appeared to interest several students; Participant B shared, “I think one of the qualities that I possess that fits this career is the passion to help others. . . . This is why I would love to be a librarian, so that I can develop programs that help communities and connect people.”

Module 2 explored the different types of libraries. At every stage, the project team strove to present the LIS field in a realistic rather than romanticized manner. The team emphasized the field’s strengths but was careful to also share hindrances, such as the high cost of graduate education and the increasingly complex nature of the information sector. With this balance in mind, the module 2 activity asked participants to list the various library settings and answer “What excites me about working in a library?” and “What worries me about working in a library?” Participants reiterated the connection to their varied educational and career experiences; they emphasized links between their backgrounds and public service. For example, Participant B, an accountant, suggested that “for me I think I would like to know more about a special library, probably [sic] in federal governments [sic], I think this could be a great opportunity to do a career in libraries. I like this position [link to a job post at the Library of Congress].” Participant B also expressed concern about academic librarianship and stated, “it will require some years to get a degree in libraries. I like the idea that, especially in a field like finances, professionals need some time to go to the library to expand their knowledge. I think with the right tools it could be really a nice job.”

Another source of concern seemed to be the subject expertise necessary for certain types of library careers, such as academic librarianship. About the latter, Participant E, an administrative clerk, shared that they were worried about “teaching at a college level,” and of the former that they worried about “coming across something I’m not familiar with and not being able to properly assist,” though they also felt excitement about “focusing on one particular subject.” Participant C, meanwhile, did not express any limitations and reflected on what they enjoyed most about librarianship: “Me gusta el tiempo en escritorio

de referencia, horas de cuento, reuniones, seminarios en línea [I enjoy my time at the reference desk, story hours, meetings, and online seminars].” Elsewhere, Participant F, a former university professor, shared that they appreciated learning “the LIS ecosystem in the United States and criteria to pursue the career or education in the field.”

Module 3 included a three-part activity that first asked participants to review what they had learned in the lesson and then list ways to gain experience in libraries. Lastly, a career-matching quiz asked participants to assess the types of library departments and working environments that might suit their needs. The quiz was designed such that those who answered mostly A might be well suited for children’s departments, those who answered mostly B in adult services, those who answered mostly C in collections and technical services, and those who answered mostly D in circulation. The following represents the outcomes from participants’ self-assessment:

Participant A: Adult services

Participant B: Collections and technical services

Participant C: Adult services

Participant D: Adult services

Participant E: Children’s librarianship

Participant F: Adult services

Module 4 addressed federal financial aid, since the high cost of graduate education often poses a barrier for prospective librarians from minoritized backgrounds. Participant B wrote extensively about how their knowledge of librarianship had been expanded but that the educational and financial path toward it is complex:

I have to explore the ways of how can I make a path to be a Master Librarian, I find out this is a great opportunity, I can see the process to study MLI[S] is possible, librarian is a more than a career is a way to give back to the community, people is [*sic*] hungry for knowledge and sometimes they can not find answers by themselves. I found out there are scholarships for citizens. Now I am in the process of studying finance but I will definitely explore this career in the future. Financial aid can be challenging but in the end the success can be worth it. I found there are a lot of open jobs in the library, and there are just a few Latinos. I saw opportunities in this field for the Latinos in the future.

Participant D expressed that it is important to understand the financial aid process “para conocer según el estatus migratorio los postgrados y los tipos de ayuda financiera, las opciones de financiamiento de estudios de postgrado, y de ayuda financiera de acuerdo al estatus que se tenga [to know the postgraduate and financial aid or financing options for postgraduate studies, and financial aid according to the status that one has].”

Gauging learners’ satisfaction with the course content and design was important for achieving the pilot program’s goals. As a method to foster community and encourage dialogue, the research team invited participants to a closing ceremony where each participant took turns sharing their experience. They received a certificate and a one-year complimentary REFORMA membership. However, it was important to also make provision for private, confidential program assessment, so participants were asked to respond to a program evaluation survey.

Based on participant reviews, the pilot CILI curriculum can orient immigrants to careers in librarianship. Specifically, an online mini-course to introduce the library profession to highly skilled immigrants proved to be effective from the participants' perspective, as demonstrated by positive evaluation responses. When asked "Based on the information that I learned through the CILI mini-course, I plan to . . .," participants completed the sentence as follows:

- "to pursue a job in an academic library";
- "I want to know more information";
- "I plan on applying to an MLIS program in the near future. I also plan on sharing what I learned with others that may also be interested in librarianship";
- "to apply for a librarian position";
- "I want to enroll in a master's or doctoral program. But for this I need to win a scholarship otherwise I can't make my dreams come true."

Similarly, when asked, "Why did you initially enroll in this course?," participants expressed the following:

- "get familiar with LIS related job market and expectations in the States";
- "get information";
- "I enrolled in this course because I wanted to learn more about the profession and what is required to obtain a Master's in Library Science";
- "for known [sic] the library environment in this country";
- "I want to improve myself and progress in this field";
- "I like library jobs."

Most participants found that the course time commitment was just right, apart from one participant who expressed that it was too short (Figure 6).

When asked whether they had recommendations for improving the course, participants had a range of opinions:

- "It sounds perfect for those starting LIS specially [sic] for education, and to enrich the course for those who have already entered this field in other countries, I suggest to add some more information regarding accreditation the certificates, or preparation tips for job interviews in LIS, databases regarding job hunting and so forth."
- "More interaction via Zoom."
- "I think the course was excellent. I do think that more group meetings would be great. This can help participants ask more questions and interact with one another. But overall I really enjoyed learning more about the profession and having the opportunity to meet one-on-one, both for the behind the scenes and advising meetings."
- "More topics, for example: librarianship classification of books."
- "Everything was perfect. Thank you very much."

Discussion

Varied results support the fact that the CILI pilot mini-course successfully introduced immigrants, most of whom were highly skilled or degreed, to the US library profession.

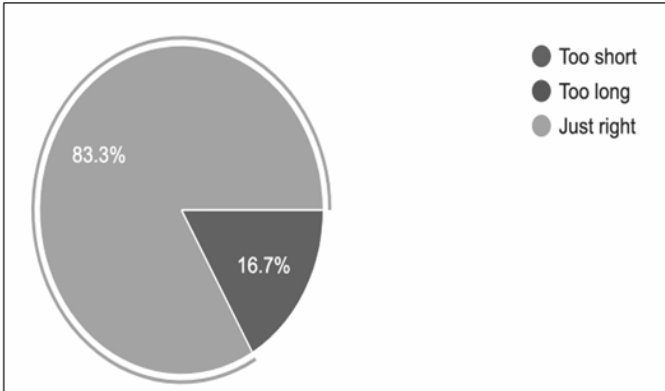


Figure 6: Participant evaluation—time commitment
Source: Authors' illustration

Participants met the learning outcomes and found the curriculum to be adequate, based on their performance and evaluations. Course assignments and reflections show that participants improved in subject knowledge, connected content to their personal experiences, and felt supported throughout the program. They also found the course duration and time commitment to be satisfactory. Hence, the constructivist and care foundations appeared suitable for the program aims. An interesting finding is that the course was not marketed exclusively to highly skilled immigrants, but the opportunity attracted mainly this population. After it is first strengthened and finalized, the CILI mini-course might present another avenue for diversifying the library profession.

There were several structural limitations. The Google Classroom platform, while cost-effective and logical for the program team, did not appear to be user-friendly or intuitive for all participants. The program team included an overview of Google Classroom during the mini-course orientation. However, participants' abilities to navigate the course material and submit assignments varied, judging from the multiple ways in which they used or shared material. For example, some participants emailed assignments. One inserted their assignment within the comment boxes. Others wrote responses on a separate Google Doc. Only two completed assignments as had been intended, by writing answers directly within fillable PDFs, even though the team expressly demonstrated assignment submission. While there appeared to be minimal disruption to participants' experience and learning, future iterations of the CILI mini-course might be improved by using a different LMS that allows for in-lesson quizzes, responses, and similar assessment.

Another potential course-design improvement involves increasing opportunities for synchronous learning by making real-time sessions optional and recorded for those who are unable to attend. At face value, the self-paced format appeared ideal for the target audience. The team included Zoom-based meetings at the front and back ends of the program. Nonetheless, participant feedback pointed to a desire for more collaboration and group engagement across the CILI program.

Moreover, after evaluating the course data, there appeared to be some disconnect between robust explanations of the various types of libraries (i.e., academic, public, special) and some module activities. For example, the career-matching quiz was inherently designed around public library stratification in that it distinguished between adult services and children's services. These and other details insinuate an emphasis on public librarianship, and the team would do well to address minor curricular discrepancies in subsequent CILI mini-course offerings.

In terms of recruitment, the CILI pilot program participants identified as Middle Eastern or Arab ($n = 2$) or Central American or Hispanic ($n = 5$). Ensuring that the mini-course includes and represents various immigrant backgrounds requires greater efforts in the future to promote the CILI mini-course opportunity among Black diasporic, Asian diasporic, and European immigrants. Increasing cohort sizes to up to a dozen participants might also benefit participant engagement. Another possibility is to organize cohorts composed of the same ethnicity or same race immigrant backgrounds, especially if participants belong to the same organizations or communities.

Finally, the CILI mini-course team will need to ensure that the course is properly marketed so that prospective students are aware that the course does not culminate in MLIS degrees or recredentialing. Some of the participants expressed misunderstandings that the pilot mini-course would lead to admittance or enrollment to an ALA-accredited MLIS program. In the closing survey, a participant responded to the question "What did you hope to achieve from the course?" with "To offer a master's or doctoral program with scholarship to those who take this course and want to progress in this field. In this way, we can be a pilot group, our success etc. can be followed, it can be the subject of research." One registrant even decided against starting the course after learning that it did not offer a job or university degree.

There were other gaps that extend beyond the purview of the mini-course but that the CILI project team needs to address before officially launching the program. These issues include the need to advocate for stronger LIS recredentialing support for those who earned LIS-equivalent degrees and were employed as librarians outside of the United States or Canada. One participant fell within this category. ALA guidance states that job seekers and employers should consider that

a master's level program in library and information studies accredited or recognized by the appropriate national body of another country . . . is the appropriate professional degree for librarians. . . . For individuals who received a master's degree in library studies in Australia or the United Kingdom, the following statement applies: It is hereby understood by this Statement of Mutual Recognition that the American Library Association, the Australian Library and Information Association, and the Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals recognize the master's-level degree programs accredited by each of the three associations (12 May 2017). (ALA, 2023)

Yet it also states that "the following countries have been identified as having 'formal' accreditation processes. An individual who has received his/her degree from an institution that is included on the countries' lists of accredited institutions/programs is considered

acceptable for employment in the United States: Australia, Germany, Ireland, New Zealand, Norway, Singapore, and the United Kingdom.”

ALA’s guidance mirrors the majority white focus that culminates in racial and ethnic disparity throughout the US library workforce. It is necessary to probe what is meant by “formal” and the rationale by which decision-makers reached an agreement with the Australian Library and Information Association and the UK Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals but not other international library associations, particularly the Association of Latin American Libraries (ABINIA) or African Librarian Association (AfLIA). As described at the start of this article, the LIS field needs deep, lasting interventions to further racial and ethnic equality. Members of the CILI project team, together with the Serving Refugees Immigrants and Displaced Persons (SRIDP) committee of the ALA Office of Outreach, Diversity, and Literacy Services (ODLOS), now plan to advocate for an expansion to ALA’s “foreign degrees” guidelines.

Conclusion

The US library and information science field is making strides toward deep racial and ethnic inclusion, particularly in light of its well-known, majority female-identifying, native-born, white Anglo-Saxon workforce. As a means of furthering globalization and representation, the CILI pilot project focused on increasing the number of people from immigrant groups who enter librarianship. The goal of the CILI project was to engage with asylees, refugees, and other immigrants to explore libraries for occupational opportunities, not simply library resources, with the hope of serving as a model for community empowerment. The team focused on introducing the library profession to highly skilled immigrants. Though successful, the pilot project must be strengthened and sustained through curricular improvement and external advocacy. With additional funding, other enhancements may include scholarships and learning stipends, career equivalency certificates, employer workshops on recruitment policies and advancement support, along with career development opportunities for current librarians of asylee, refugee, and other immigrant backgrounds.

The pool of participants included an art lecturer, accountant, library clerk, professor, daycare teacher, and librarian—all examples of people who could strengthen our profession. However, exclusionary barriers and practices make the career path less attainable and prevent many from entering or advancing within the LIS field. The CILI pilot project demonstrated that LIS educators and professionals can redress this disparity by partnering to welcome prospective librarians from immigrant backgrounds into LIS education.

Ana Ndumu is an assistant professor at the University of Maryland College Park’s College of Information Studies. She primarily researches and teaches on library services to immigrants—particularly, Black diasporic immigrants—along with methods for promoting racial realism and representation in LIS. She is the editor of *Borders & Belonging: Critical Examinations of Library Service to Immigrants* and co-editor of *The Black Librarian in America: Reflections, Resistance, and Reawakening*. Email: andumu@umd.edu

Michele A. L. Villagran is an accomplished educator, innovative speaker, entrepreneur, consultant, cultural intelligence and diversity & inclusion expert with over 25 years of experience in the public and private sectors. Villagran’s research focuses on diversity and social justice in library and information science and cultural intelligence phenomena within libraries. She earned her Doctorate of

Education in organizational leadership in 2015 with Pepperdine University, with her dissertation focusing on cultural intelligence. She also completed her Master's of Dispute Resolution and Certificate of Dispute Resolution with Pepperdine. At the University of North Texas, Dr. Villagran completed her MLS degree in legal informatics and her MBA in strategic management. She is an assistant professor with the School of Information at San José State University. She also serves as CEO of CulturalCo, LLC, consulting in areas of cultural competency, diversity & inclusion, conflict resolution, and emotional intelligence. Email: michele.villagran@sjsu.edu

Vilma Sandoval-Sall will be completing her graduate studies in the fall of 2023 at San José State University in library and information science. She has over 22 years of experience in public libraries, serving all types of communities including marginalized populations, in the areas of reference services, programming, outreach, partnership development, marketing communications, translations, and collection maintenance in Anne Arundel County Public Library and Prince George's Memorial Library System, Maryland. She is one of the co-founders and current president for the REFORMA Mid-Atlantic Chapter. She is a recipient of the American Libraries Association Spectrum Scholars Program in 2022–2023 and recipient of 100 Latina Leaders Award for the DMV (Delaware, Maryland, and Virginia) Area in 2019. Email: sallvilma1@gmail.com

Kirsten Grunberg earned her MSLIS with an Advanced Certificate of Digital Humanities from Pratt Institute, has an MEd from Framingham State University, and completed the required courses without dissertation on the PhD program in social and cultural studies at the University of Costa Rica. Her cultural and academic background has led her to a number of professional and volunteer opportunities and community leadership roles in Costa Rica, New York City, and Maryland. She served as a supervisor of the Youth Services Department of the Hyattsville Library of the Prince George's County Memorial Library System in Maryland, and as a bilingual (English/Spanish) children's librarian at the Yonkers Public Library, the Brooklyn Public Library, and the New York Public Library. Email: kike.grunberg@gmail.com

Laura Tadena is Austin Public Library's community engagement librarian and a 2023 American Library Association (ALA) Emerging Leader. Her background is in architecture, education, and organizational development. She specializes in addressing inequities in the built environment, creating inclusive and welcoming library spaces and services, and building community. She serves as the Co-chair of the Texas Library Association Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Committee and on the Public Library Association Equity Diversity Inclusion and Social Justice Committee. Email: lauratadena@gmail.com

Roman Santillan is an adult librarian at Montgomery County Public Libraries, Maryland. He studied archaeology at the University of Yucatán, Mexico, before receiving a Master's degree in Spanish from the University of Ohio. He also earned an MLIS at Rutgers University and did doctoral studies at City University of New York. His career as a librarian in public and academic libraries has taken him to New York City, Washington, D.C., and Maryland. Over the years, he has taught college-level Spanish and Latin American literature in Ohio, New York, New Jersey, and Washington, D.C. His published works in English and Spanish include essays, short stories, and diverse articles that focus on academic librarianship and the history and literature of Latin America. Email: romansantillan@gmail.com

N. Yasmin Bromir is a graduate student at the University of Maryland College Park's College of Information Studies. She has over five years of experience working in both academic and public library systems. Currently, she is a library access services specialist at Montgomery College. She serves on the 2023 Pura Belpré Award Selection Committee and the REFORMA Mid-Atlantic Chapter. Email: yasminbromir@gmail.com

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