

Board 94: Developing Support for Critical Citation Requirements for Civil and Environmental Engineering Graduate Research

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Abstract

The 2020-2021 school year saw the implementation of the coordinated efforts of several academic librarians from the University of Maryland, College Park in beginning a program of citation justice practices education in departments across campus. Citation justice recognizes that citations are a form of power in the current state of academia and focuses on actively citing authors with historically marginalized identities in an effort to center and uplift their voices. Equitable citation practices involve auditing citation lists, but also making sure that meaningful engagement with works from authors with diverse identities is present in the research. This paper documents the efforts that have been put in place so far around implementing citation justice education at UMD libraries including developing instruction modules and research guides. In particular, focusing on the librarians' instigation of a close partnership with the faculty and graduate students of the Civil and Environmental Engineering Department (CEE) who were particularly receptive to expanding their scholarly communication practices to include aspects of citation justice. Additionally, it explores the potential to develop further support for tools including code, templates, and author associations and lists that can be used to implement diverse citations. Future steps include developing library support that would allow graduate students in the department of CEE to meet a requirement for diversity in their citation practices that will serve as concrete and practical applications of citation justice that will be applicable in their post-academia careers.

Introduction

Increasingly in recent years, librarians have taken up the task of improving the level of diversity, equity, and inclusion, referred to commonly as DEI, in their work. Academic libraries, as an integral part of colleges and universities have a responsibility to provide equitable access to knowledge and information [1]. In some areas such as education, where equity and inclusion has been a conversation for over 70 years, it is easier to discern where bias exists. Library instruction builds a foundation on this long-standing scholarship. In other areas, including workplace structures, it can be a lot harder to discern [2]. Citation practice, heavily supported by librarians in academia, is one of those areas where the discussion of DEI is newer. Nevertheless, applying DEI principals to citation practices, acknowledging the impact, and teaching about it is an imperative undertaking for librarians.

My literature review revealed that while there is limited scholarship that has been produced on this topic, there is little available written in the Library and Information Science (LIS) sphere. In this article, I aim to explore the work that has been done at the University of Maryland, College Park (UMD), the work currently in progress, and the potential future direction. In addition, I engage with some of the existing work on critical citation practice so that it can be made available to the larger LIS community.

This paper documents the efforts that have been put in place, so far, around implementing citation justice education at UMD Libraries and potential future direction these projects could take. I focus on a partnership with the faculty and graduate students of the Civil and Environmental Engineering Department (CEE) who were receptive to expanding their scholarly communication practices to include aspects of citation justice.

Critical Citation

Citation is a mainstay of academia and the world of scholarly publication. Citing the work of others is intended to give credit to the body of scholarship and research on which a new practice is built as well as make a case for legitimacy for new work. Most universities require research and publication of their faculty for tenure and promotion. To be successful in this process, a candidate needs to show impact. This impact is usually heavily based on citation metrics. While there is a push from some, such as those in the open scholarship movement to change this practice and put value on other metrics of impact [3], it remains a heavy driver at most academic institutions, meaning citation practices have broad impact on who gets recognition in academia [4]. In addition, research that is more heavily cited usually is regarded as more impactful and is more likely to be cited by others both in published papers and in the university classroom [5]. Citation counts have an impact on who is conducting research, who is teaching, who is getting promoted, and even who gets to stay in academia.

Critical Race Theory (CRT) is the foundation of critical citation practice. The term was coined in 1989 by now well renowned law professor at UCLA, Kimberlé Williams Crenshaw [6], and refers to an academic framework created to understand why even after the civil rights legislation of the 50s and 60s there still exists widespread racial inequality. At the heart of CRT is the acknowledgement that race and racism is a social construct that leads to systemic inequalities with Black and Indigenous people of color (BIPOC) at the bottom [7]. CRT recognizes race as socially significant and is systematically and institutionally embedded. The framework rejects the idea that racism is an act that is individually perpetrated but rather that it is embedded in structures, and entrenched in law and public policy making it a feature not a fluke of structural and systemic racism [8]. CRT also recognizes that the realities of our everyday lives are relevant to scholarship and it is important to embrace the lived experiences of BIPOC [9], [10]. While CRT was originally created to look at the intersection of race power and law, it has since been applied to many other disciplines including education, health sciences, history and even librarianship [11].

Critical citation practice, also known as citation justice, aims to correct institutional inequalities by acknowledging the intersection between identity, power, and citation. Critical citation uses the CRT framework while leaving space to apply it to other marginalized identities including Queer identities, disability, immigration status, religion, and geographic location. As such

applying equitable citation practice necessitates acknowledging there is a growing body of evidence across disciplines that BIPOC people, and those with other marginalized identities are cited less frequently than their white male counterparts [12]. It necessitates citing authors not only by considering content but also considering identity. Citation justice recognizes that citations are a form of power in the current state of academia and focuses on actively citing authors with historically marginalized identities in an effort to center and uplift their voices [13].

Most if not all academic institutions favor those from non-marginalized backgrounds; generally able-bodied white, cisgender, heterosexual men. This can be seen from degree recipients at all levels [14] to faculty composition [15]. Those whose identities stray from that, especially those with an intersection of marginalized identities, have a more difficult time entering, building and maintaining a career in academia [12]. Citation practices are a large contributing factor and undercitation of people with marginalized identities can be seen across disciplines [16]–[20]. According to Zurn et al., “undercitation means that the actual proportion of citations for papers led by underrepresented scholars is less than what would be expected if gender, race, or ethnicity did not play a role in citation practices [21].” In engineering, female researchers cite themselves less than their male counterparts [22] and in some disciplines white males are cited more than anyone else, even by those who do not identify as a white male [18]. If those with marginalized identities are being cited less they are also less likely to achieve tenure or promotion, they are less likely to be visible in their discipline, and they are less likely to stay in academia. Furthermore, without this representation they are less likely to be in the classroom, and less likely to be represented in positions of leadership. Citation has far reaching impact on representation in the academic system, the professional world and ultimately global society. Working towards equitable citation practices is necessary to level the playing field in academia and beyond.

Academic libraries are in an optimal position to support the adoption of citation justice. Subject liaisons, instructional and other librarians with public facing roles already provide citation support and instruction as an existing part of our responsibilities. Citation equity ties in closely with the aspirations of DEI work thus it follows logically that libraries should engage in citation education and support through the lens of citational justice. In the next section, I explore the citational justice work that has already been developed and executed by librarians at UMD.

Critical Citation Instruction at UMD

In 2020-2021, two librarians in the teaching and learning department at UMD, rolled out a module they had developed to teach critical citation practice. They continued to adapt and expand their work until leaving their positions in 2022. In order to teach critical citation, the librarians developed learning modules delivered in the form of workshops and lectures with a detailed accompanying research guide [23]. I began my tenure at UMD after these librarians had

left and much of the instruction they had been running, had ceased or been put on hold. This section will explore their work, which is the precursor and foundation for the Civil and Environmental Engineering (CEE) graduate critical citation requirements and supporting resources I am working to now develop with faculty in the department.

A large part of the citation justice modules involved workshops taught to different groups of university affiliates. Figure 1 outlines the major elements from each presentation. Since the needs of each group differs, the corresponding workshops covered material targeted to meet these needs. For example, the module targeted to undergraduates includes information defining what citations are and why they are important, since many undergraduates have had limited exposure to citations [24]. The workshops targeted at graduate students and faculty do not contain this information because it is assumed they are already familiar with the citation landscape but do contain more comprehensive resource lists [25], [26]. While the level of detail may vary, all of the workshops have some elements in common; defining critical citation and why it is important, discussion of how to incorporate critical citation into the researcher's personal practice, and resources that can be used to do so. Critical citation is taught as a progression that becomes more complex moving from undergraduate students to graduate students and faculty.

Critical Citation Workshop Comparisons

	Undergraduate [24]	Graduate [25]	Faculty (General) [26]	Faculty (CEE)
Definition of citations and why they are used, including different styles (ie. MLA, APA, etc.)	x			
Example of common citation elements	x			
Group activity: students create their own citation style	x			
Definition of critical citation	x	x	x	x
Breakout small group discussions about potential problematic aspects of citation practice	x	x	x	
Overview of importance of critical citation	x	x	x	x
Brief overview of tools and practices that can be used to incorporate critical citation practice in one's own work	x			
Presentation of why making citation choices based on identity is important		x		x
Detailed overview of tools and practices to use to implement critical citation practice in one's own work, including specific examples/links to resources		x	x	
Data points and studies supporting the inequity in current citation practice across various disciplines			x	
Information on why/how of teaching critical citation to students			x	x
Breakout small group discussions on finding diverse authors in specific fields			x	
Discussion of why DEI is important integral to the university's mission				x
Examples of how librarians can support critical citation work			x	x
Data specific to the department				x
Bibliography				x

Fig 1. Comparison of critical citation workshops given to different stakeholders on the UMD campus. The CEE workshop information is based on a presentation given to the department which is not publicly accessible.

In 2022, the Civil and Environmental Engineering department requested a presentation on citation justice to be given to department faculty. The presentation is unpublished, so the information presented comes from discussions with both presenting librarians as well as personal access to the slides. The presentation begins by defining DEI and discussing the importance of DEI to the UMD campus as well as the expectation that it be included. One of the main points was that while the department of engineering was succeeding in attracting a diverse student body, it wasn't necessarily doing well in retaining these students. Like the other modules, there is also an overview of citation justice. The presentation includes a focus on how this related to CEE's strategic plan as well as how libraries and librarians can help. This includes individual help with workflows and resources that help a researcher to implement citation justice but also an overview of the modules developed to support different levels of researcher and student at UMD. The presentation was well received and, some faculty in the CEE department wish to explore ways to further integrate equitable citation practice into their graduate curriculum.

Assignment Proposal

After the presentation on citational justice, faculty in the CEE department became interested in integrating critical citation practice into their graduate student's research requirements. One of the faculty members developed a short reflective assignment for the graduate students they advise to complete. Included in this assignment was identifying who is most cited in the field, analyzing their identities, and reflecting on identities that were underrepresented or missing. After this, the faculty contacted the CEE subject specialist librarian looking to partner on creating an integrated requirement to include diverse voices in graduate research with the hope of expanding the requirement to the entire department. I am now transitioning into this subject specialist role and exploring how to continue the critical citation work. In this section I propose the shape the CEE critical citation graduate requirements can take, the methods and tools that can be used to support such a requirement, and my role as a librarian in continuing this work.

The approach taken to integrate critical citation practice into graduate requirements is important to consider. It would be difficult to have rigidly specific requirements that are uniform for all students. Citation justice is an emerging practice, and resources such as auditing tools and lists are being currently developed. In many subject areas there is a lack of robust resources or one-stop-shops for finding authors with marginalized identities. The subject matter can affect the results as well as the researcher's initial knowledge of diverse authors in their field. In addition, many graduate students already find meeting the demands of their programs to be very time consuming. While it is important that the students begin this exploration with base requirements, we want the assignment to be something achievable with a reasonable time investment. Developing critical citation practice takes time, and is a process, so it is important the requirements reflect this and ultimately engage the students in this process. As such, we wish to develop an assignment that will have both quantitative and qualitative components and where the researcher sets goals that are appropriate and achievable. This is also an assignment or

requirements that will accompany the graduate student throughout their research process, from the planning, research, analysis, paper drafting, reviewing and eventual presentation and publication. Designing the assignment to show growth and have space for meaningful reflection on the process is important.

Understanding Citation (in)equity

The first step in incorporating citation equity practice into research is for the researcher to understand what citation equity is and why it is important. Graduate students are likely to begin with varying levels of understanding of all aspects of critical citation practice and potentially even citation practice in general. So to begin with, educating students on citation equity practice is important. I propose creating a module, based on the already developed ones described in the preceding section, but tailored to CEE, which would be a part of the graduate student's coursework at the beginning of their degree. This module would give a base to all graduate students and introduction to critical citation practice. In addition, there are some existing references that would make a useful supplement including:

- *Intersectional Inequalities in Science* – A tool to explore citations across field, race and gender which includes methods, data and analysis [27]
- *How to Cite Like a Badass Tech Feminist Scholar of Color* – A blog post with printable zine that outlines ways to engage in critical citation practice [28]
- *Cite Black Women* – A collective of black women who collect resources and campaign to push researchers to cite black women [29]

Setting Goals

In the planning stage students should identify what their goals are for citation. Catherine D'Ignazio and Lauren Klein outline their process to set aspirational goals for their book, *Data Feminism*, and this makes a good model for others to follow. In it, they outline the metrics they hope to achieve to address 8 identified structural problems; racism, patriarchy, cissexism, heteronormativity, ableism, colonialism, classism, and proximity [30]. The *Data Feminism* model, is used as an example in UMD's critical citation practice modules and I propose students use a similar model for goal setting. Students should have the option to think big at this point and be able to set goals for all 8 categories. It is likely, however, that for many students being required to focus on just 1 or 2 categories will make the scope of the project more manageable. In the *Data Feminism* example the authors audit their work in both the draft and final stage of the process where they reflect on the degree to which they meet their aspirational metrics [30]. I propose students do the same with this assignment, as the initial goals provide a solid starting point and these can be adjusted as needed as their research progresses.

Finding Diverse Voices

Since critical citation practice is based on citing authors based on identity, deriving a conclusion on an author's identity is necessary. Depending on the information available, however, the validity of these conclusions is variable and can sometimes be problematic. For example, race is a social construct, not based on biology [31] and is often seen in binary terms. If someone doesn't publicly identify their race, the querent needs to make this judgement based purely on appearance. To some extent this seems ok, as race is socially constructed, but it can become problematic if someone, who identifies as Black, for example, does not visually appear dark skinned. When choosing to cite someone who is part of the LGBTQ+ community, there are issues of potentially outing someone, or using their deadname. Like any other research process then, it is important for researchers to come up with the criteria that they will be using to determine identity and how this will fit into their goalsetting and auditing process.

The option of consulting with the subject specialist librarian will be important to this step of the process and it should be integrated into the requirements. At the library, we can support the creation of a diverse authors list specific to the CEE and engineering field. In addition, the following, are tools researchers can use to find and identify diverse scholars in CEE:

- Lists of self-identified researchers in the field exist and new ones are appearing regularly. The extent that existing lists cover, however, is still limited and will be discussed further in the next section. Students can also begin to compile and share their own lists, which could be helpful in the graduate/discipline specific process. Some examples of existing lists that could be particularly relevant to the field of Civil and Environmental Engineering are:
 - *Cite Black Authors* – A database of self-identified black authors across multiple disciplines [32]
 - *500 Women Scientists* – An organization of women scientists with the mission to make science more inclusive, accessible, equitable and more including GAGE, a public facing database of women and gender diverse STEM scholars [33]
 - *Black in Engineering* – A website created to “support black faculty, researchers, practitioners and students in engineering and to serve as a resource for community building, sharing experiences with implicit bias and systemic racism, providing action items to address racial injustice, and identifying collaborators and sponsors [34]”
 - *CiteHER* – An organization “dedicated to supporting computing+tech education and workforce development for Black women and girls”, includes a bibliography of papers [35]
 - *The American Society of Civil Engineers* – The largest professional organization for Civil Engineers; includes a DEI division with news and resources and partners with other diverse engineering organizations [36]

- Social media sites like Instagram and Twitter can be places to discover new researchers in a few ways. It is acceptable practice and common for people to self-identify on their social media pages. Even simple searches such as <black civil engineer> will yield results. Following accounts of those who are looking to promote diverse researchers, such as the twitter page of Black in Engineering (@BlkInEngineerng) can introduce the researcher to many diverse people in the field as well as the research they are working on.
- Traditional databases and reference lists from published work of authors with marginalized identities is another place to look to find diverse authors. Many common databases will have some features that allow filtering by geographic region, which can be a helpful tool in discovering authors from geographically underrepresented areas. In the near future, databases might even be able to sort by identities as there is currently a large push in the publishing industry to start uniformly collecting this data [37]. In addition, while even authors with marginalized identities tend to preference white cis male authors in their citations, their reference lists can be another way to discover other researchers from diverse backgrounds.

Auditing

Auditing citations at several points in the research process is important, especially as citations often change in the editing and peer review process. The UMD research guide to citation justice links to a basic spreadsheet template that can be used for in depth auditing [23]. Keeping track of citation composition using a spreadsheet allows the audit to be in-depth and thorough, although it can be time consuming. Codes have also been developed to analyze the gender and ethnic makeup of a bibliography and can provide an overview audit in a fraction of the time. It is important to keep in mind, however, that these codes are far from precise and are based on specific datasets. In an ideal situation both the spreadsheet and code methods would both be utilized. Librarians can be helpful guides at this stage in the process by troubleshooting potential issues with code and helping to identify potential weaknesses with different auditing methods as well as providing overall guidance with citation management. Two tools that can be used to analyze a bibliography are:

- *CleanBib* – Code for analyzing the probable gender, racial and ethnic makeup of authors in a bibliography, includes a detailed explanation on the methodology used [38]
- *Gender citation Balance Index Tool (GBCI)* – A tool to estimate the gender composition of a bibliography [39]

Diversity Citation Statements

A diversity citation statements (DVS) will be created by students at the time they are ready to publish and present their work. DVS are acknowledgements appended to a publication acknowledging the authors' own biases and outlining how equitable the citations are. According

to Zurn, Bassett and Rust, diversity statements include “(i) the importance of citation diversity, (ii) the percentage breakdown (or other diversity indicators) of citations in the paper, (iii) the method by which percentages were assessed and its limitations, and (iv) a commitment to improving equitable practices in science [40].” DVS are becoming more common in some published work, and some journals are adopting guidance and even requirements for inclusion in their published material [21], [41]. DVS are a tool that students can use to acknowledge the importance of diverse citation practice and the process they have undertaken to engage in it. Incorporating DVS into their final published work is a way for students to show what they have been able to achieve, the considerations they have made, process undertaken, as well as acknowledgment of areas for improvement in the future.

Current Gaps

There are several gaps that currently make this undertaking more difficult. One is the scope of diverse author lists. Current lists are either broad in coverage, relatively small or both. This can make diversifying one’s research on any specific research topic difficult through existing lists alone, especially outside of the broader introductory and background sections of the published research. There are several potential ways to address this. First, there is a need for further development of lists and resources on diverse authors. In addition, a more in-depth analysis of current resources for identifying diverse authors in STEM, in general, and CEE, in particular, should be undertaken. Acknowledging this limitation is important, however, it should not be a barrier to incorporating equitable citation practice into CEE research and publication at the current time.

Another limitation is the lack of data collected on the equitable citation modules implemented at UMD. While much of the instructional content and delivery methods has been based on CRT and research based instructional best practices, I do not have access to data collected on the previously implemented sessions. Moving forward, it will be important to collect this data so that it can be used to evaluate the current approach and make future improvements.

Conclusion

The plan to implement support for critical citation requirements for civil and environmental engineering graduate research is still in its initial stages. Next steps include meeting with faculty in the CEE department to continue to develop this plan so that it can be rolled out as a pilot with graduate students starting in fall 2023. Library support for critical citation practice will be essential for instruction and supporting students throughout their research process. As the subject specialist for this department, I plan to create and deliver in the initial instruction modules and develop supplemental resources. In addition, I will be available for regular consultations to support student work. Another future step will be to develop a list of diverse

authors specifically in the CEE field. I hope that an analysis of the implementation of this program, including feedback from students and faculty participants, can be used to further develop and improve guidance for support for critical citation practice in the future.

Critical citation instruction and support should be integrated into library practices whenever possible. Engaging in critical citation practice is a process which researchers can improve over time. Since this is still a relatively new practice, mainstreaming the discussion of the impact of critical citation practice on academia is still a large part of this work. The proposed requirements I put forth make the basis for a pilot, but further implementation, analysis and revision is needed. Integrating this practice through instruction modules and research requirements that allow for researchers to engage in the process should continue. In addition, further scholarship on critical citation, specifically regarding its integration into the LIS field is needed.

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