Enhancing the The Diverse Children's Picture Book Resource Hub

1. Statement of National Need. Wide representation of people of color in children's literature collections is valuable. The inclusion of characters from multiple racial and ethnic backgrounds allows readers of color to see their lives and experiences as visible and mirrored (Cullinan, 1989), allows children to experience the breadth and depth of other experiences and cultures (Cullinan, 1989) and supports literacy (Smith & Lewis, 1985). For these reasons and more we celebrate Multicultural Children's Book Day during the month of January and affirm the importance of diversity in library collections.

Unfortunately, however, more than one third of libraries do not achieve adequate representations of diversity within their picture book collections (Williams & Deyoe, 2014). One obstacle is identification: no comprehensive source or systematic methodology for pinpointing titles featuring people of color currently exists. Library of Congress and BISAC subject headings, as well as the *A to Zoo* subject guide to picture books, all use racial/ethnic terms broadly, in many cases failing to use them at all in cases where diverse characters are simply performing the everyday actions of children (e.g. *Hana Hashimoto, Sixth Violin*).

Bates College received an IMLS Sparks! Ignition grant to create a controlled vocabulary to address this challenge. We have solidified a vocabulary and are on schedule to make it public in June 2017 via what we call the Diverse Children's Picture Book Resource Hub (a searchable online database of picture books featuring human characters of color published since 2002; this Hub will be linked with The Picture Book Project, a circulating collection of picture books featuring people of color housed at Bates College Ladd Library). Feedback about the vocabulary has been enthusiastic and identified two Hub improvements: a.) the development of a Collection Analysis Tool; and, b.) Search Engine Optimization (SEO).

2. Project Design. We propose a three year project to address this feedback: Year 1 will involve the development of Collection Analysis Tool software, insuring use across multiple platforms (in conversation), Search Engine Optimization (firm identified), and a project coordinator search. The enhanced Hub will be launched during Year 2 at which point the project coordinator will assist with responding to users, data management and necessary upgrades. This work will continue along with strategic dissemination during Year 3. Key players throughout this work will be the current Sparks! Ignition grant PI, Bates College Psychology Professor Krista Aronson, Bates College Humanities Librarian Christina Bell, multicultural children's book author Anne Sibley O'Brien, and consulting librarians (in conversation), forming an Advisory Council.

2.a. Collection Analysis Tool. Many librarians already receive detailed collection and subject profiles from companies like Baker and Taylor, but these products are not relevant for diverse titles. In order to enhance their diverse collections librarians need access to detailed information - - the books' number and nature. We have been prototyping such a tool which has enabled one library, for instance, to learn that 2.4% of their picture book collection features characters of color, that 65% of this proportion features characters of African American descent, most often in books classified as oppression using our vocabulary (stories of systemic and institutionalized prejudice), and that books classified as cross-group (books portraying character interactions across racial or cultural difference) feature Black and White characters only.

This project will develop a free online collection analysis tool to provide such information in both narrative and graphical form. Specifically, a function will be embedded in the Hub to which librarians can upload an Excel file with ISBN information for all of their picture books. This list would be automatically cross referenced with Hub data to generate a detailed diverse picture book title report. A sample report will be included in the full proposal should we be invited to submit.

2.b. Search Engine Optimization. An expansion of the controlled vocabulary driving the Hub with search engine optimized (SEO) terms will make the project visible to the widest audience possible. This analytical process will add colloquial and common speech to the existing lexicon. For example, while we may use "oppression" to define a concept in a book, we want to ensure that a user looking for "racism," "persecution," or "injustice" also sees that book in the course of a search. The optimization will also further expand Library of Congress terminology in the database to optimize the search for librarians, the target audience of the Hub.

2.c. **Strategic Dissemination**. We have a multi-part plan to share information with the library community about the Hub and collection tool. We will pursue work with the Maine State Library through Youth Consultants to "train the trainers" to reach children's librarians statewide. We will also offer presentations and/or workshops at national conferences (e.g. The Association of Library Services for Children, The American Association of School Librarians, The Public Library Association, The Urban Libraries Council and the Association of Small and Rural Libraries). And, our recent research has helped us identify 20 libraries across the country (large and small; rural and urban with large and small budgets) with robust diverse picture book collections. We have spoken with each of these librarians and will engage interested parties in a practitioner advisory council.

3. National Impact. A National Leadership Grant will enable us to add crucial features to the Diverse Children's Picture Book Resource Hub, and engage librarians in ongoing collaboration in a nationally important topic (http://readingwhilewhite.blogspot.com for conversations among librarians; http://weneeddiversebooks.org for information about a national grass roots movement). The expanded Hub will make a transformative contribution by granting power to users to engage more deeply with diverse picture books and their content, facilitating focused collection expansion. This will enable libraries to provide greater opportunities for cultural engagement, thereby enhancing social well-being -- two features at the heart of catalyzing positive change.

4. Budget Summary. We plan for a three year project with a total budget request of $248,377. For personnel, we will request $4,800 for two undergraduate research assistants, and at the beginning of Year 2 will hire a full-time Project Coordinator to work for 2 years. (Starting salary: $38,000. Total budget request, including Year 3 pay increase and fringe benefit costs: $104,293.) We will also request a total of $35,500 for SEO and website development/programming services; $15,000 for honoraria to the project's Advisory Council; and $20,000 for travel and conference registration to carry out the Strategic Dissemination plan. Total direct costs equal $179,593. $68,784 will be for Bates College's indirect costs (38.3% on a modified total direct cost base, negotiated with DHHS).