

Middle Grade and Young Adult Books with Black, Indigenous People and People of Color: Where are they?

The University of Florida (UF) in partnership with Bates College seeks \$464,070 to enhance the discoverability of middle grade (MG) and young adult (YA) novels featuring Black and Indigenous people and People of Color (BIPOC) characters. This partnership project emerged from a grassroots effort, The [Diverse BookFinder](#) (DBF; funded by IMLS Sparks and NLG), through metadata designed to enhance the discoverability of contemporary picture books featuring BIPOC. A majority of librarians (95%) consider having diverse books for children and teens “very important” or “important”; 50% have set inclusive library goals for their collections ([2018, SLJ](#)). The most frequently asked question about this resource is, “What about middle grade and Young Adult titles? Where are they?” To address this need, UF’s George A. Smathers Libraries (led by Education Library librarians) and Center for Children’s Literature, with Bates College will leverage existing yet untapped partner assets to adapt and expand DBF custom metadata and coding protocol so that it is appropriate for MG and YA books, and provide professional development in the area of equity and inclusion through a community of practice (CoP) and community sourced data creation, deepening engagement with librarians in a way that centers and amplifies their voices, while simultaneously creating networks, resources, and practices to cement project sustainability.

1. Statement of National Need. Diverse books support the development of positive identities among BIPOC adolescents and young adults (Myers, 2014), which is essential for academic success (Chavous, et. al., 2003). And, diverse books introduce young people to characters’ emotional states through internal dialogues, struggles, motivations and intentions, making them better able to imagine emotional states in the real world where they will encounter complicated people and situations (Batson, 1998; De Waal, 2012). Thus, reading diverse books can increase feelings of interpersonal closeness (Wright et al., 1997) and improve overall interpersonal and intercultural competence (Aronson et al., 2015; Cameron & Brown, 2006). But, no comprehensive source or systematic methodology currently exists for pinpointing MG and YA titles featuring BIPOC characters for library collection inclusion. This proposal is designed to meet these needs by expanding an existing resource, the DBF, to include MG and YA books.

Growing from [picture book research conducted by Dr. Krista Aronson](#), the [DBF](#) team has cataloged and analyzed more than 3K trade picture books to create a one of a kind [Search Tool](#), [Source of Critical Data](#), and [Collection Analysis Tool \(CAT\)](#). Using the CAT, librarians can generate a [report](#) that reveals the strengths and gaps in racial/cultural representation within a collection. If awarded, this work will allow for MG and YA books to be included in each of these resources to support librarians in MG and YA collection development.

2. Project Design. Year 1: Work will start at UF through the English Department and [Center for Children’s Literature and Culture](#). Mirroring the process used to create DBF picture book metadata, a purposefully designed undergraduate course will serve as an incubator, exploring the nexus of academic (e.g. children’s literature, librarianship), and lay discourses to create metadata structures for MG and YA books that integrates academic and nonspecialist views. The foundation for the CoP and community sourcing will also be established through outreach and community (100 CoP members). A project manager will be hired to help recruit, train, and

communicate with the CoP and Advisory Council (10 members) using a model for recruiting a diverse cadre of participants for the NEH sponsored [Migration, Mobility, and Sustainability: Caribbean Studies and Digital Humanities Institute](#). This person will also oversee development of the community sourcing website by coordinating communication across UF, Bates, and outside programming efforts. **Year 2** will focus on the creation of a community sourcing database and website, including customized training materials (e.g. manual, white papers, and videos) and protocols, along with the piloting of these materials. Once finalized, all materials will be housed on The DBF website (password access). Within smaller cohorts, CoP members will receive training, along with peer, team, and Advisory Council mentorship towards the goal of informed, consistent, and reliable metadata entry. **Year 3** will finalize community sourcing efforts and update Diverse BookFinder resources with MG and YA information. The group will process all MG and YA books published during the funding period. The team will use formative and summative assessment methods to ensure reliability and validity while determining levels of success. As no comprehensive source or systematic methodology currently exists for identifying MG and YA titles featuring BIPOC characters it is difficult to specify book numbers. Similar to planning The DBF launch, the team will not know how many books are published annually until work is initiated. The team will execute a dissemination plan to promote this new resource primarily through webinars, conferences, DBF social platforms/newsletter, and social media marketing.

3. Diversity Plan: The products generated by this work focus on diversity, equity, and inclusion. The CoP will be created through an application process, giving priority to a diversity of racial, cultural, gender, age, religious, regional, political, and professional (e.g. public and school librarians) lenses. The Advisory Council will include similarly diverse lenses. The DBF has an existing advisory council and network on which to draw for these purposes.

4. National Impact: By building and supporting a CoP, this work strengthens, centers, and amplifies librarian's voices within equity and inclusion spaces. In addition to obtaining individual professional development/certification, there is the potential that CoP members will carry their learning to others through local and state networks. Finally, the training tools and processes created will outlive the funding period, cementing the sustainability and development of future individuals and cohorts well into the future.

This project brings together multiple assets: UF offers the expertise and an established reputation in creating and hosting community sourcing platforms (e.g., [Digital Library of the Caribbean](#)), along with a robust Children's Literature program through which the course will be offered, and an [historic children's literature collection](#). Bates College maintains the experience and know-how to assist with metadata development, and facilitate community sourced book coding, including the necessary mentorship to UF project team members. In addition, the DBF has an established audience, platform, and voice for reaching necessary audiences at all phases of this work, including the marketing and dissemination of its resulting products and services.

5. Budget Summary: The IMLS funding request of \$464,070 includes a project manager (\$161,047), programming costs (\$133,062) Advisory Council honoraria (\$22,500), media marketing (\$10,900), collaboration/dissemination travel (\$10,000), and indirect costs (\$126,561). Cost share contributions of \$464,070 in personnel effort is committed to the project and will be documented in the round-two budget if invited to submit.