As North American society continues to tackle racism, it is crucial to work on weaving diversity into the cultural fabric. Homogeneity, however, and whiteness in particular, impede pluralism. Librarians, by virtue of being at the centre of intellectual exchange, have the ability to emphasize diverse ideas, experiences, and points of view and enable social change. While many librarians are activists for a number of noble causes such as the democratization of knowledge, unrestricted access to information, intellectual freedom, and a pluralistic approach to knowledge creation and dissemination, librarianship as a profession is homogenous in many ways. Librarians working in a homogenous and a predominantly white profession cannot properly ensure pluralistic approaches to knowledge, enable democratization or access, or identify with and serve the needs of a pluralistic society. The LIS profession will benefit from having diverse voices and perspectives.

Although the diversification of the profession itself is essential to challenge the oppressive legacy of institutional whiteness, laying the theoretical groundwork is crucial in mobilizing the necessary intellectual shift. Quite fittingly, books embodying a diversity of voices and perspectives can contribute positively to both the personal and institutional self-reflection needed to catalyze the process of change; Topographies of Whiteness is one such book.

Topographies of Whiteness is a collection of essays by LIS scholars and practitioners. It consists of three sections generally organized around themes. The first section, titled "Early Formations: Tracing the Historical Operations of Whiteness," charts the historical topography of whiteness through three papers that explore the racist history of white philanthropy, the racialized vision of archival collections, and the library as a white institution. This historical backdrop lays a fertile foundation for the discussions and arguments of the remaining papers featured in the collection.

The second section, titled “Present Topographies: Surveying Whiteness in Contemporary LIS,” invites the reader to reflect on whiteness through a number
of different perspectives, such as the personal experiences of librarians of colour, the ethics of fashion and the culturally alienating and discriminatory nature of the Western professional aesthetic, the shortfalls of white feminist activism, and technocratic idealism within librarianship.

The final section, titled “Fissures: Imagining New Cartographies,” critically examines the whitewashing of LIS curricula, microaggressive language, the myth of meritocracy, and the usage of terms like "diversity.”

Although much of the book is couched in critical race and feminist theories, both of which are fitting theoretical frameworks for the discussions contained within the collection, the variety of perspectives, themes, and arguments are expertly curated. What the collection does exceptionally well, in virtue of the superbly selected multiplicity of entry points into the topic, is paint a broad and comprehensive picture of the problem of racism and whiteness in the LIS profession. The topics are focused on librarianship and the LIS profession, but the contents of the discussions are not limited to library professionals. Employees in other professional settings will benefit from the insights, arguments, and contemplations of the contributing authors. Moreover, the value of this collection also transcends the professional sphere, since the lessons, perspectives, and questions raised by the contributors also resonate within the more private individual spheres of our everyday lives. There is, of course, a wider applicability of the issues discussed, since both our private and our professional lives are constitutive of the grander cultural fabric of our contemporary societies, many of which continue to be multicultural in principle but quite monolithically white in practice.

The chapters are a call to acknowledge white privilege, to become an ally to underrepresented librarians, and to diversify the LIS profession. They provide outstanding explanations of the broader causes of problems, such as high attrition rates and lack of diversification, making the book an excellent source of instruction for library professionals on raising awareness of racism and providing advice on how to be better advocates for diversity in their profession.

Despite breadth and depth of topics covered, the chapters do not do an equally comprehensive job of providing broader solutions to some of the causes of racism they illuminate. While the papers focus on immediate solutions, such as engaging in micro-affirmations or bystander interventions in the workplace, they do not explore solutions to the wider contributing factors, which many of the papers argue are primarily responsible for the problems being discussed. Comprehensive discussions of the tension between socio-economic and socio-cultural barriers to attending graduate school and the requirement of such credentials in the LIS profession, for example, are surprisingly missing from an otherwise superb collection of essays.
Several papers do mention the inherent whiteness of higher education, but none explicitly proposes a radically alternative framework within which such whiteness would no longer monopolize ways of knowing and valuing. Radical ideas, like rethinking the heavily racialized credentialing and hierarchical structures within the profession, remain somewhat underexplored.

Even though there is space within this volume to engage in other highly relevant discussions, the book is truly excellent in scope; the collection’s multi-themed framing sheds light on more than just the problem of racism and its relation to white privilege. The collection also exposes the myriad of nuanced ways in which whiteness continues to weave itself through the tapestry of what many consider to be a pluralistic culture and society. Since ideas have the power to change perspectives and, as some of the chapters suggest, perspectives shape social and cultural realities, it is imperative that the wisdom gained from engagement with a diversity of voices and experiences be widely disseminated. That is why this collection should pass through the hands of all librarians: from those just embarking on their library school journey to those, like library scholars and administrators, who are currently responsible for shaping library trends. This is a philosophically rich and professionally valuable book that embodies voices we should all make a much greater effort to hear.