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### Decolonizing Children's Literature: Diversity & Representation in Six Scholarly Journals

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# “DECOLONIZING CHILDREN’S LITERATURE: DIVERSITY & REPRESENTATION IN SIX SCHOLARLY JOURNALS”

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## Introduction

Studies of children’s publishing show that children’s literature remains an overwhelmingly White, cisgender, heterosexual and abled field. However, little research has been done to measure representation and diversity across scholarship within the discipline.

This project accompanies the creation of a new journal, *Research on Diversity in Youth Literature*, which was founded in 2016 as a dedicated space for diverse scholarship on children’s literature.

**Our hypothesis:** *Publication of such scholarship is increasing, but at an uneven pace; spikes in numbers often reflect an occasional focus (themed issue, etc.) rather than steady growth across time & publications. Efforts to center more diversity remain crucial and dedicated venues such as RDYL are necessary to achieve that goal.*

## Materials and Methods

Our team used quantitative analysis to collect data from six peer-reviewed journals over eight years (2012-2019). To define “diversity” we used criteria established by Lee & Low Books’ Diversity Baseline Survey and by the Cooperative Center for Books for Children at the U of Wisconsin-Madison.

Working in pairs, researchers counted the total number of articles each year as well as the number of articles related to diversity. Each researcher gathered statistics for a 4-year span; they then swapped the periods under study with their partners so that each journal’s publications were analyzed twice. Partners did not see each other’s results.

## Results to Date

All 6 journals published diversity-related articles, with a high of 68% (*L&U*) and a low of 14% (*Jeunesse*). The mean was 32.25 without high/low and 38% with high/low included.

**Our questions going forward:** *How many of these articles were part of diversity-related special issues or CFPs? What might that number tell us about the growth of representation overall? Do these figures indicate a point at which venues such as RDYL might become unnecessary, and if so, when?*

## Findings 2012 - 2019

Journal	Total Articles	Articles on Diversity	Percent
<i>ChLA Quarterly</i>	165	60	36%
<i>Children’s Literature</i>	75	26	34.5%
<i>Children’s Literature in Education</i>	200	53	26.5%
<i>Jeunesse</i>	90	13	14%
<i>Journal of Children’s Literature</i>	109	25	32%
<i>Lion and the Unicorn</i>	50	34	68%

### Sources Cited

*ChLA Quarterly*  
<https://www.childlitassn.org/chla-quarterly>

*Children’s Literature*  
<https://muse.jhu.edu/journal/214>

*Children’s Literature in Education*  
<https://www.springer.com/journal/10583>

Cooperative Children’s Book Center  
<https://ccbc.education.wisc.edu/>

*Jeunesse: Young People, Texts, Cultures*  
<https://jeunessejournal.ca>

Lee & Low Diversity Baseline Survey 2.0  
<https://blog.leeandlow.com/2020/01/28/2019diversitybaselinesurvey/#more-17488>

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