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As part of our Student Curator initiative, the Curators were required to audit several reading lists, as agreed with the relevant module convenors, to analyse the level of diversity. This involved looking at the authors and their background (ethnicity and gender), format of the material (for accessibility purposes), place and date of publication.

The work highlighted to the academics the importance of diversity and inclusivity in module design, and in particular the breadth of the collections held at UoY. In addition it signposted them towards diverse publishers to explore when compiling reading lists, and how to ensure that modules at York are attractive to students from a wide range of backgrounds. Assessing reading lists for diversity is in fact fraught with problems! Making assumptions about gender, ethnicity, etc - so the assessment itself was limited and had to be treated with some scepticism. Getting engagement from busy academics could be challenging, plus our volunteer academics were from the Medical School whose lists are very stable and with little flexibility for changing reading from year to year.

We gathered feedback from the Student Curators about the work and met with the academics to discuss how useful the reading list assessment was and how it would impact on their lists in the future. Most institutions are committed to diversifying and decolonising their curricula; module design and therefore reading list design is key to this. In supporting academics in doing this work, libraries are responding to students' concerns about diversity and inclusion in their modules, and also helping to make the institutions they support more attractive places to study for students from a wider variety of backgrounds.

Update 14th December 2023.

The project has run for a second year. Following feedback from the previous curators, we decided not to pursue the audit of reading lists. The internship is 10 hours a week for 10 weeks and the curators struggled to complete the work. We may decide to continue the audit as part of a separate project but that is very much dependent on staffing and workloads.