Opening remarks from **Tracie D. Hall**, Executive Director, American Library Association (ALA)

Each day, we make intentional and unintentional decisions about whether we will work for social justice or against it. After years in libraries and social services and arts administration, I have come to see inaction as actually working against the cause for justice.

In my first address as ED to ALA’s membership, I issued a call that we make an intentional choice to have the association’s legacy be justice. By issuing that call, I meant for us to explore the construct of the library as both the vehicle and the driver of social justice.

Honing in on our purposes today, on one aspect of social justice: equity, diversity and inclusion, I am led to ask: What is our responsibility to equity and inclusion while we consider that literacy and educational attainment are two of the key contributors to economic self-sufficiency, and that their absence contributes to the school-to-prison pipeline, to high unemployment, and to generational poverty.

And we know that each of these things is being exacerbated by the twin pandemic of the coronavirus and the increase in... the visible displays of injustice. In libraries as in the book industry, inequity in our ranks makes our work miss its mark.

According to recent studies, only about 6.8% of the 300,000 individuals who identify as library professionals identify as Black. Only 8.6% identify as Latinx. Only 4.6% identify as Asian American or Pacific Islander. And less than 1% identify as Indigenous or Native American. Over 85% of librarians and library workers identify as white.

The library and information services profession – its inability to reflect its widely diverse current and potential user base—limits its resonance, its reach, and even its credibility. That is why my fellow member and staff leaders at the American Library Association have prioritized the rapid diversification of the LIS workforce as one of our key priorities.

And today, I want to issue that same challenge to BISG: To diversify the ranks of the trade, education, professional, and scholarly publishers, as well as distributors, wholesalers, retailers, manufacturers, service providers, and library leaders. And let us work tirelessly for racial and economic and environmental justice.
Let our collective work lead to equity, diversity, and inclusion, social justice; and let our legitimacy be assessed on our commitment to that goal.

https://bigs.org/diversityequityinclusion