Information, culture, and memory centers increasingly anchor urban redevelopment projects in historically marginalized communities challenged with contemporary social and economic disparities. This dissertation situated libraries, archives, and museums within a socio-cultural context and examined the role of cultural heritage institutions in gentrification. Librarians, archivists, curators, and community advocates in Detroit, Michigan shared their viewpoints and experiences of gentrification in a legacy city. Using a modified Delphi process, the e-Delphi panel explored the need for assessing policy, service delivery, and programming in a city of color at-risk to gentrification-induced displacement.

This mixed research study used a concurrent triangulation design. A panel of experts (round one: n = 32; round two: n = 31; round three: n = 30) was selected to participate in a three-round e-Delphi survey conducted from June 2017 to August 2017. The e-Delphi panel was composed of information, culture, and community workers who: (a) practiced at an anchor institution; (b) in a neighborhood undergoing gentrification; or (c) with community members seeking to stay put in transitioning neighborhoods. Qualitative and quantitative data were analyzed using inductive analysis and descriptive statistics. A nonparametric statistical test (Kendall’s Coefficient of Concordance - W) measured the extent of agreement among the e-Delphi panelists’ rankings of the five most important issues and ten most important recommendations regarding the role of cultural heritage institutions in gentrification and displacement.

Thirty panel members (93%) of the round one survey indicated that it was important for cultural heritage institutions to assess if revitalization partnerships contributed to gentrification-induced displacement. The panel generated twenty-five
propositions in round two which were ranked by the panel in the third and final round of the survey. Kendall’s W for the rank ordering of issues (W = .008; X² = 15.815; df = 6; p = .015) and recommendations (W = .050; X² = 24.467; df = 17; p = .085) indicated a very weak level of agreement. The implication of this finding suggested a need for further exploration. This study adds to the global investigation on the role of cultural heritage institutions in gentrification and displacement and contributes to the emerging body of knowledge in the U.S.