'Sorry, I Didn't Realize…': Techniques for Being Inclusive in the Planning and Provision of Library Services and Programs

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A Need to Apologize?

- You offer a program only to find out that some patrons did not feel included in the activity.
- You offer a service that only benefits a small percentage of your patron base.

How do you respond when someone points out that your program, display, service, or collection is not inclusive?

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What Do We Mean by Inclusion?

inclusion refers to a variety of integration approaches, but the goal is to blend special education students into the traditional classroom.
— Suevon Lee

—sometimes used before a noun
// an *inclusion* classroom/school

4 : the act or practice of including and accommodating people who have historically been excluded (as because of their race, gender, sexuality, or ability)
// ... academic libraries have traditionally struggled to address problems of equity, diversity and *inclusion*. The low representation of people of color in library staff has been a particular shortcoming, despite many initiatives to attract minority staff to the field.
— Lindsay McKenzie

// Tech workers say they are more interested in diversity and are more willing to work to promote *inclusion* in their workplace ...
— Jessica Guynn

// Meaningful civic *inclusion* even now eludes many of our fellow citizens who are recognizably of African descent.
— Glenn C. Loury

(Merriam-Webster, n.d.)

Who Is Included?
Who Is Left Out?

- Abilities or (dis)abilities

- Age

- Educational differences

- Gender, gender identity

- Immigrants, migrants, language diversity

- LGBTQ

- Local/regional

- Racial/ethnic categories

- Religion

- Socioeconomic status

- Homeless

(Mehra & Davis, 2015, pp. 19-20)

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What Does Lack of Inclusion Look Like in Libraries?

- Some patrons will struggle to find items in the collection for/about/by/of interest to them.
- Some patrons will not be able to attend programs offered by the library.
- Some patrons will not be able to use all library services.
- Some patrons will feel unwelcome in the library as a space.

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Lacking Collections: Youth

A study of youth collections by Williams & Deyoe (2014) found:

- 15% of libraries in the study held none of the 116 recommended LGBTQ titles.
    - 237 academic libraries, 326 public libraries, and 207 school libraries.
- 40 academic libraries and eight public libraries held no recommended disability titles.

Do inclusive books for youth exist?

- Yes, but…
    - "…they need to be highlighted, celebrated and promoted – and we need more of them" (Strick, 2013, p. 132).
    - Many libraries may not have the funding to purchase as many as they would want/need (Mabbott, 2017).

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Lacking Collections: Seniors

- Long standing assumption that seniors only want books about health, or fiction to read (Horton, 2019).

- "By being aware of the actual needs and not the assumed needs of these patrons, libraries will be able to more efficiently provide the physical and electronic resources needed by senior citizens" (Horton, 2019, p. 183).

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Lacking Collections: Archives

Special Collections & Archives

- Symbolic annihilation: Loosely defined as the misrepresentation or absence of marginalized groups in a variety of contexts (Caswell et al., 2016).

- Because "history has the potential to be commoditized and engineered," radical archiving is suggested as a "model for institutional collaboration with communities" to maintain "autonomy and inventiveness with information, all the while respecting the rights of an individual, as a creator or maker." (Schwenk, 2011, para. 10)

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Bias in Collection Development?

- **Pre-censorship**: "the practice of collection development librarians excluding books from the collection as a result of conscious or subconscious bias that may be related to social, political, or personal views" (Quinn, 2012, p. 278).

- **Cognitive bias**: "prejudices that occur as a result of erroneous judgment, thinking, or thought processes" (Quinn, 2012, p. 281).

Gaps in Programming?

- Are equal number of programs offered for patrons of varying age groups?
    - Assumptions about homogeneity of age groups (Horton, 2019).
- How and where are programs advertised?
- When are programs offered?
- What topics are featured in programs?

Programming Concerns: Youth

A 2015 study by Hughes-Hassell and Stivers suggested those working in youth services have a lack of cultural awareness in how they approach their work:

- When asked to define the role of youth services librarians, only two included the culture of the community when developing programs and services.

- Factors such as socioeconomics, digital divide, and poverty were mentioned as influencing youth and care giver use of the library, but no other cultural factors were identified.

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A Lack of Cultural Awareness?

- Cultural ethnocentrism (Hughes-Hassel & Strivers, 2015)

- Discomfort addressing issues of race/ethnicity (Hughes-Hassel & Strivers, 2015)

- Lacking LIS coursework (Hughes-Hassel & Strivers, 2015; Mabbott, 2017)

- History of LIS as a profession (Hughes-Hassel & Strivers, 2015)

Gaps in Services?

Who has access to services in the library?

- Can those with mobility issues access the library easily?

- Do library policies deter the use of some services by some populations?

- Is outreach conducted for all members of the community?

- Can technology offered be used by all?

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Bias in Library Services?

- Tarulli (2018) suggested bias exists in reader's advisory.

- Curry (2005) found that many librarians struggled to provide balanced reference services when asked to address an LGBTQ-focused question.

- Both reader's advisory and reference are impacted by the bias found in the library catalog (Tarulli, 2018).

- Librarians should also be aware of both verbal and non-verbal communication when providing these services (Curry, 2005; Tarulli, 2018).

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Policies that May Disenfranchise

- **Library Fines**
  - Can lead to denial of access and service (Gehner, 2010).
    - Fine-free cards for seniors (Horton, 2019)
    - Fine forgiveness or waiver options (Horton, 2019)
    - Fine free libraries (Salazar, 2019)

- **Check Out Periods/Rules**
  - Can be limiting for some members of the population (Horton, 2019)

- **Bag/Odor Policies**
  - Tend to target certain population (Mars, 2012)

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Policies (cont.)

Noise!

- Negative impact on teens, immigrants (Gehner, 2010)
- May not align with curriculum requirements, i.e. group projects and activities.

Registration

- An overly complicated or hostile process may lead to a negative impression of the library overall (Gehner, 2010).
- Address and ID requirements.

Name Changes/Name Usage

- How restrictive is the process? (Keralis et al., 2017)
- How inclusive is the use of pronouns and preferred names? (Smith-Borne, 2019)

SUGGESTIONS AND NEXT STEPS

Awareness & Intentionality

- **Awareness is key**
  - Implicit bias is real and can negatively impact all library types in collections, services, and programming.

- **Intentionality**
  - Purposefully choosing to collect books with broader representation, to offer services that support everyone, and to create programming with everyone in mind.

Reducing Bias in Collection Development

- Remember that selection is for the user, not for the selector (Schweinsburg, 1995)

- Make an effort to be aware of personal views that may influence professional judgment (Pratt, 1995).

- It is not the role of the librarian to determine if something is morally appropriate; instead, try to provide access to enough resources depicting all views that someone can make their own decision (Morrisey, 2008).

- Consider the value of inclusive titles for everyone, not just the population featured in the publication (Hughes-Hassell, 2013; Mabbott, 2017)

Concrete Actions

- In-depth community analysis
- Data collection: Surveys, focus groups, interviews, Photovoice studies.
- Collection analysis
- Building & space analysis/observations
- Technology use studies

Community Analysis

- Determine current make-up of community served by library

  - Socioeconomic, age, gender, education-levels, cultural backgrounds, languages spoken.

- Should be repeated regularly as community's change.

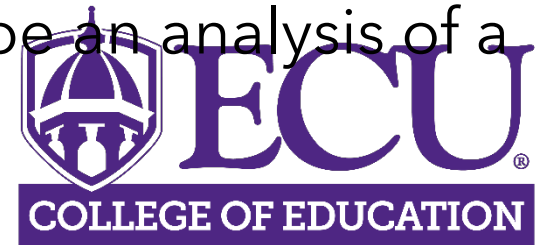- Determine potential partners in the community for joint efforts.

Data Collection

- Knowing your community means talking to your community.
  - Surveys: Easiest option but often offers the least useful information.
  - Focus groups and interviews: More time consuming, but more detailed information; Be ware of only talking to the "served."
  - Photovoice: Visual way to engage with users and determine their needs and preferences (Luo, 2017)

Diversity Collection Analysis

- Determine what items you hold

- Determine what items are missing

- Determine how the collection is being used (or not used).

  - Ciszek and Young (2010) and Kristick (2020) offer suggested methodologies for academic libraries.

  - Mortensen (2019) describes a diversity collection audit that may appeal more to public libraries

  - Jorgenson & Burress (2020) describe an analysis of a high school library collection

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Building & Space Use Studies

- Determine how usable and accessible your building and spaces are.
  - ADA compliant may still not be "usable" for some patrons.
  - Separation of spaces, use of spaces, and issues with both may suggest changes for improved patron use.
    - Dominguez (2016) offers suggestions tied directly to user experience.

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Technology Use Studies

- Can be included in a collection analysis or even a space analysis
  - Who is using the technology?
  - How is it being used?
  - What technology is requested but available?
  - What technology is available but never used?

Useful Resources

Checklists/Templates

- Mabbott, C. (2017). The We Need Diverse Books campaign and Critical Race Theory: Charlemae Rollins and the call for diverse children's books. *Library Trends, 65*(4), 508-522. *Includes an example of a checklist created in the 1940's by Rollins that still holds merit for assessing the quality of "diversity" books.*

- Mehra, B., & Davis, R. (2015). A strategic diversity manifesto for public libraries in the 21st century. *New Library World, 116*(1/2), 15-36. doi: 10.1108/NLW-04-2014-0043

Children/Youth Services

- Ellis, D. (2018, September 19). Children's books about diversity that celebrate our differences. *Book Riot.* https://bookriot.com/2018/09/19/childrens-books-about-diversity/

- Grassi, R. (n.d.). *Creating welcoming and accessible libraries for children with disabilities* [PowerPoint slides]. https://www.minitex.umn.edu/Training/DisplaySessionHandout.aspx?Title=Creating%20Welcoming%20and%20Accessible%20Libraries%20for%20Children%20with%20Disabilities&SessionID=648

- Kaeding, J., Velasquez, D. L., & Price, D. (2017). Public libraries and access for children with disabilities and their families: A proposed inclusive library model. *Journal of the Australian Library and Information Association.* https://doi.org/10.1080/24750158.2017.1298399

- Mrs. G. (2018, November 19). The 2019 ultimate list of diverse children's books. *Here Wee Read.* http://hereweeread.com/2018/11/the-2019-ultimate-list-of-diverse-childrens-books.html *Also includes past lists that may be of interest.*

Useful Resources (cont.)

Language Diversity

- Colorín Colorado. (n.d.). *School libraries & ELLs.*
  https://www.colorincolorado.org/school-support/school-libraries-ells
- Yamauchi, H. (2019). Language learners in the library: Developing a partnership with pre-college ESL at a community college. *The Journal of Creative Library Practice.*
  https://creativelibrarypractice.org/2019/04/09/library-learning-without-borders-collaborating-with-pre-collegiate-esl-classes-at-a-community-college/

Services for Disabled/Differently Abled

- Grassi, R. (2017, January 17). Libraries for all: Expanding services to people with disabilities. *Illinois Library Association Reporter, XXXV*(1).
  https://www.ila.org/publications/ila-reporter/article/55/libraries-for-all-expanding-services-to-people-with-disabilities
- thelibrary.org. (n.d.). Services for people with special needs. *Springfield-Greene County Library District.* https://thelibrary.org/services/assistive.cfm

Services for Seniors

- Prasad, P. (2009). Reference services to senior groups in the San Antonio Public Library. *The Reference Librarian, 50*(1), 99-108. https://doi.org/10.1080/02763870802546456

Useful Resources (cont.)

Organization Sites

- Programming Librarian: https://programminglibrarian.org/
  A searchable site for program ideas. Includes some examples for inclusive programming for different library types.
- Special Needs and Inclusive Library Services (SNAILS): https://snailsgroup.blogspot.com/
- We Need Diverse Books: https://diversebooks.org/

Books

- Ford, L., & Norfolk, S. (Eds.). *Supporting diversity and inclusion with story: Folktales and discussion guides.* Libraries Unlimited.
- Jones, C., & Petty, J. B. (2013). *Multiethnic books for the middle-school curriculum*. ALA Editions.
- Jones, S. D., & Murphy, B. (Eds.). (2019). *Diversity and inclusion in libraries: A call to action and strategies for success.* Rowman & Littlefield.
- Krueger, s. G. (2019). *Supporting trans people in libraries*. Libraries Unlimited.
- Mestre, L. (2010). *Librarians serving diverse populations: Challenges & opportunities.* ACRL.
- Naidoo, J. C., & Park, S. (Eds.). (2013). *Diversity in youth literature: Opening doors through reading.* ALA Editions.

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Ciszek, M. P., & Young, C. L. (2010). Diversity collection assessment in large academic libraries. *Collection Building, 29*(4), 154-161. doi: 10.1108/01604951011088899

Curry, A. (2006). If I ask, will they answer? Evaluating public library reference service to gay and lesbian youth. *Reference & User Services Quarterly, 45*(1), 65-75

Dominguez, G. (2016). Beyond gate counts: Seating studies and observations to assess library space usage. *New Library World, 117*(5), 321-328. http://dx.doi.org/10.1108/NLW-08-2015-0058

Horton, J. (2019). Senior citizens in the twenty-first-century public library. *Public Library Quarterly, 38*(2), 179-192. https://doi.org/10.1080/01616846.2018.1554176

Hughes-Hassell, S. (2013). Multicultural young adult literature as a form of counter-storytelling. *Library Quarterly: Information, Community, Policy, 83*(3), 212-228.

Hughes-Hassell, S., & Stivers, J. (2015). Examining youth services librarians' perceptions of cultural knowledge as an integral part of their professional practice. *School Libraries Worldwide, 21*(1). http://dx.doi.org/10.14265.21.1.008

Jorgenson, S., & Burress, R. (2020). Analyzing the diversity of a high school library collection. *Knowledge Quest, 48*(5), 48-53.

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Kristick, L. (2020). Diversity literary awards: A tool for assessing an academic library's collection. *Collection Management, 45*(2), 151-161. https://doi.org/10.1080/01462679.2019.1675209

Luo, L. (2017). Photovoice: A creative method to engage library user community. *Library Hi Tech, 35*(1), 179-185. https://doi.org/10.1108/LHT-10-2016-0113

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Mehra, B., & Davis, R. (2015). A strategic diversity manifesto for public libraries in the 21st century. *New Library World, 116*(1/2), 15-36. doi: 10.1108/NLW-04-2014-0043

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Morrisey, L. J. (2008). Ethical issues in collection development. *Journal of Library Administration, 47*(3-4), 163-171. https://doi.org/10.1080/01930820802186506

Mortensen, A. (2019). Measuring diversity in the collection: A collection diversity audit is a crucial tool for libraries to assess their offerings. Starting small makes it manageable. *Library Journal, 144*(4), 28.

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Smith-Borne, H. (2019). Creating a welcoming and inclusive environment for transgender and gender fluid music library users. *Music Reference Services Quarterly, 22*(1-2), 18-29. https://doi.org/10.1080/10588167.2018.1536691

Strick, A. (2013). Is everybody in? A look at diversity and inclusion in children's books. *School Librarian, 61*(3), 131-132.

Tarulli, L. (2018). Bias in readers' advisory services. *Reference & User Services Quarterly, 57*(3), 172-175.

Williams, V. K., & Deyoe, N. (2014). Diverse population, diverse collection? Youth collections in the United States. *Technical Services Quarterly, 31*(2), 97-121. https://doi.org/10.1080/07317131.2014.875373