

Library Services

"Equal access starts with policies, practices, and continued training that focus on inclusivity as a part of our individual and institutional missions" (Williams, 2016).

Library events, programs, and selecting volunteers are all opportunities to promote inclusion and diversity. Libraries can inadvertently be gatekeepers. Libraries are often at the cutting edge of progress, deciphering what gates are in place, and what glass ceilings exist. An MLIS degree can be a gatekeeper. Money, time, and the hurdles in higher ed will hinder many excellent and qualified candidates. Libraries can combat this by hiring entry level positions, and encouraging these employees to consider careers in librarianship by helping to secure funding and addressing other hurdles like childcare, technology, and access to education.

A common question in the library is "where's the bathroom?" Offering gender neutral bathrooms and the use of singular "they" when giving directions are practical applications that can benefit all patrons. This practice welcomes trans and non-binary people, while also encompassing people who may present as non-binary because of age or health conditions. By quickly answering "the women's is here, the men's is there, and everyone can use that bathroom," you've covered all the bases. And, you've provided them with information they could use in the future, to show family or friends where to use the bathroom they need and while modeling inclusivity.

Libraries can seek to include diversity in their staff and volunteers by looking to their patrons. Some questions to consider: If a library serves immigrants, does the library have immigrants on staff? How does a library incorporate the homeless population into discussions and feedback opportunities? Are formerly incarcerated people involved in programming, volunteering, or hired by the library?



Kailee, Alex, Vincent Pelete from the IJS, and Jade in front of Louis Armstrong & Lucille Wilson's home.

Collections

"Equity takes difference into account to ensure a fair process and, ultimately, a fair outcome. Equity recognizes that some groups were (and are) disadvantaged in accessing educational and employment opportunities and are, therefore, underrepresented or marginalized in many organizations and institutions. Equity, therefore, means increasing diversity by ameliorating conditions of disadvantaged groups" (ALA, 2017).

Modern collections celebrate diversity. Libraries are incorporating inclusivity and diversity into their displays, programming, events, and in collection development policies. Inclusive displays increase patrons' opportunities to browse authors and resources they may not have initially searched for and incorporates diversity into the delight and pleasure of library browsing.

Diversity is often phrased as an statistic to increase or an end goal. Some libraries serve communities where cultural and racial diversity is prevalent and the library has not achieved this diversity by increasing resources or services to attract certain demographics. Libraries in Miami are examples of diverse patronage, where branches may serve many needs and desires within their community, and there can be great demographic differences between branches. With this amount of inherent diversity, paired with constantly evolving technology and needs, libraries need to conduct frequent needs assessments to evaluate the developing needs and desires of their patrons.

Open Educational Resources and digital services can be ways to help meet diverse needs and save on costs. Digital accessibility can mitigate transportation hurdles and allow for 24/7 access to online collections. Online translation services can be paired with collections to increase opportunities and broaden access, especially with digital collections.

It's helpful for librarians to have knowledge of the history of Library of Congress and Dewey Decimal subject headings, particularly in regards to racism, homophobia, and sexism that was prevalent in subject headings as recently as the 1980s. I.e. Homosexuality was previously cataloged under medical and psychological disorders and deviancies (Sullivan, 2015).

Archives

"Archivists collectively seek to document and preserve the record of the broadest possible range of individuals, socio-economic groups, governance, and corporate entities in society. Archivists embrace the importance of identifying, preserving, and working with communities to actively document those whose voices have been overlooked or marginalized" (SAA, 2017).

Archives and special collections embody dichotomies of inequity from past and current generations, while forging inclusion in contemporary acquisitions and curations. When archivists address periods of inequity throughout history and the present, they will increase their relevancy, equity, and inclusion, while appealing to larger audiences. Contemporary archivists are acknowledging racism and sexism has excluded many people and their contributions from collections. Archivists can proactively seek out representation from excluded voices and edit finding aids to remove sexist, racist, homophobic, transphobic, and culturally insensitive language.

Updating finding aids and descriptions will broaden access to collections, for example, when searching LGBTQ or by a gender other than male and female may find contemporary sources, but search mechanisms can only show as much information as their creator allowed. Likewise, descriptions may contain sweeping statements such as 'these performers were the top musicians of the 1930s,' but whose definition of top musicians is used as the authority? Many clubs were not integrated in the '30s and women were ostracized from many opportunities. Collections can state these inequities, proactively seek out acquisitions from excluded voices, and edit out sweeping exclusionary remarks.

References

Thank you to the Institute of Jazz Studies and Rutgers University for hosting the 2019 IJS Fellowship. This poster's photos are from the 2019 IJS Fellowship, the New York City Public Library, and the rainbow sound waves are courtesy of Pixabay. Jade is in the MLIS program at University of South Florida, Kailee is in the MLIS program at Rutgers University, and Alexandra is in the MLIS program at Simmons University. A complete reference list and additional resources on inclusion, equity, and diversity are available using the QR code.



In 2019, Merriam-Webster added to the definition of the word "they." It now includes: "4 – used to refer to a single person whose gender identity is nonbinary."

Inclusive language clarifies descriptions, welcomes patrons into the library, and avoids exclusivity.



Sylvia Hernández – Brooklyn Quilt Girl, Arturo "Chico" O'Farrill Music & Papers, IJS, NJ.



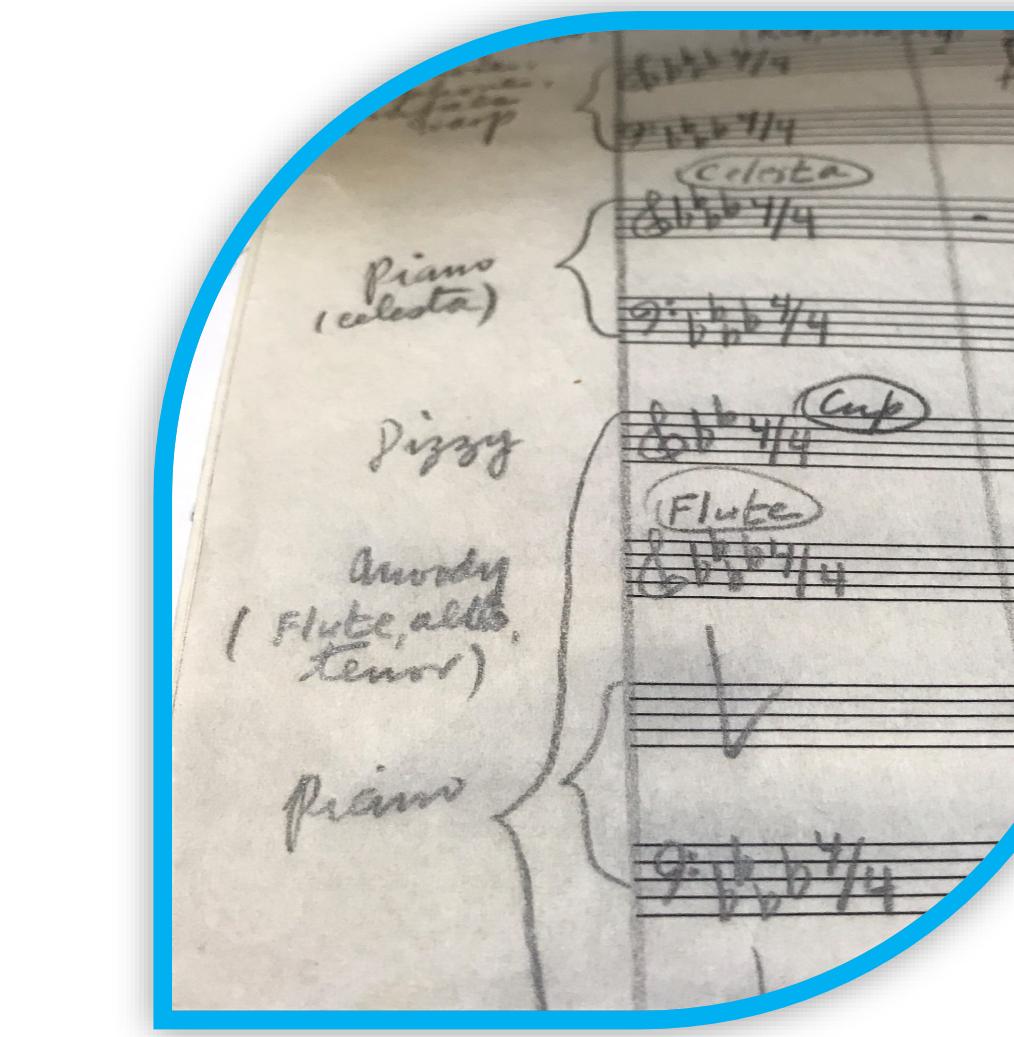
New York City Public Library, June 2019.

Inclusive Language Broadens Access for All to Library Services, Collections & Archives

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Use this QR code to access additional inclusive language resources and references.



Arturo "Chico" O'Farrill Score featuring Dizzy Gillespie, IJS, NJ.



Alex, Jade, and Kailee at the Louis Armstrong Archives, Queens College, NY.

Acknowledgement of Native & Indigenous Cultures & Contributions

How is your organization highlighting Joy Harjo, the 2019 US Poet Laureate? How are you promoting Indigenous People's Day? Rescinding the Document of Discover? How do you acknowledge the Native Peoples who live and have lived on the land your organization now occupies? (Democracy Now, 2019). Visit the QR code for more resources.

Display as an Active Method of Inclusivity

If you like this, you might like that. Using this popular recommendation model is one method to promote diversity and inclusion while avoiding tokenizing authors. Did your women's history display include trans women? How can displays be used to educate patrons and bring attention to aspects of the general collection they may have never considered searching? Can volunteers take turns curating a display to bring diversity and equity into curation and recommendations?

OER & Affordable Resources

Libraries champion free and low cost access to information, resources, and technology. OER are quickly catching on as viable options for providing patrons with access to quality resources. The Creative Commons offers varying levels of attributions for the use of free resources. Libraries can take advantage of consortiums and regional library networks to reduce costs for e-resources i.e. Florida provides residents with access to the Florida Electronic Library.

Inclusive Needs Assessment

Inclusivity needs planning and funding. By conducting a needs assessment, libraries can link inclusion and diversity goals with the organization's mission while establishing a plan for inclusion, equity, and diversity. An assessment allows for employee and patron feedback, needs, and desires that may have previously been unheard.

Collection Descriptions, Catalogs & Finding Aids

It's helpful to establish criteria for biographies and contributions. In the past, the accomplishments of a woman's husband may have often been included on her bio, while his bio did not return the favor of a platform. Equitable terms like spouse and partner can add context and encompass a greater range of identities. Can patrons search and access e-resources for LGBTQ topics and health topics they may feel unsafe asking for or using in public?



Accessibility & Accommodations

Disability activists brought attention to the ADA Act by the "Capital Crawl" on March 12, 1990. The physical library space is just one consideration in accessibility. LibGuides and websites need to be checked with accessibility tools, such as WAVE, to ensure patrons with accessibility software can access e-resources. Libraries can use their leverage with database and catalog companies to exceed standards in accessibility and voice patrons' accommodation suggestions.

Inclusive Language & Active Listening

Serving the public and student bodies provides library staff with ample opportunities to model active listening and inclusive language. These inclusive practices help avoid culturally insensitive language, inadvertent microaggressions, and bias which often occur in society, and will arise in the workplace unless they are consciously acknowledged.

Marketing, Signage & Forms

Marketing can be a method of allyship as well as a promotional tool. Updating forms to include more than two genders, and opportunities to self-disclose ethnicities and identities are methods to bring equity and inclusion into routine interactions. Intentionally creating inclusion in ads will broaden your audience. An event "Girls that Code" may sound empowering to many, while potentially alienating trans and non-binary children.

Ethical Values in Vision & Mission

Using inclusive and intentional language can welcome all patrons and set a course for incorporating inclusion in strategic planning. Libraries can look to new models for sharing resources and spaces, such as fine free libraries and makerspace policies that reflect their vision and mission, while providing increased accessibility for their patrons.

Diversity & Inclusivity Training

Connecting staff trainings with the vision and mission of an organization can instill meaning and pride within an organization. Knowing the whys and the outcomes within the changes will provide employees with information they can relay to patrons. Knowing the values of the organization will help employees share feedback and ideas for achieving goals and inclusion.

The language library and archival staff use with patrons can help decolonize libraries and create a space for a range of identities.