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Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion

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Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion

Erratum

Removal of name of person who did not work on issue

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ARE FOR
EVERYONE

EQUITY, DIVERSITY, and INCLUSION

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Upcoming Issue

Fall 2019

*Youth Services Take Over
OLA Quarterly!*



EQUITY, DIVERSITY, and INCLUSION

COVER: Original artwork by Rebecca McCorkindale. See: <https://hafuboti.com/>
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From the Guest Editor



ELAINE HIRSCH

Elaine is the Associate Director of Watzek Library at Lewis & Clark College and currently serves as OLA President. OLA has been the focus of Elaine's professional service for over twenty years and she is constantly inspired by her innovative, socially conscious, and dedicated association colleagues. Her MLS is from Indiana University.

Equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) are at the center of our work in libraries. A cornerstone of democracy, libraries provide free and open access to services and resources for everyone in our local communities. This year EDI is a specific area of focus for the Oregon Library Association (OLA), and related initiatives include this issue of *OLA Quarterly* (OLAQ), the development of an EDI Plan for the association, and setting Equity, Diversity, Inclusion as the annual conference theme to provide a concentrated opportunity for OLA members to engage in related conversations. Together OLA is exploring EDI in its many connotations and intersections, including race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, age, physical and mental abilities, body size, religious beliefs, political ideologies, and geography.

This issue shares the important work that a wide variety of libraries are doing to help create equitable and inclusive communities in Oregon. It includes contributions from public, academic, and school libraries, and authors include staff, librarians, administrators, and graduate students in library and information science. On the coast, Driftwood Public Library in Lincoln City has updated its policies to better serve patrons experiencing homelessness, and Coos County Library Services District has initiated an early literacy program partnership with a local correctional institute to reach at-risk children and their caregivers. A Portland Public Schools



librarian, who is also an Association for Library Services to Children (ALSC) Equity Fellow, shares her experiences at ALA, and we'll learn how Oregon State University Libraries are helping to fill the gap of information on African American history in Wikipedia.

Explore how Sherwood Public Library developed diversity, equity, and inclusion strategies through a broad strategic planning process and how a middle school librarian in Beaverton initiated a culturally relevant book club in her school community. This issue concludes with an article on Somali language sewing classes at Multnomah County Library, EDI micro-actions undertaken at Oregon Health & Science University Library by library and information science graduate student workers, and reflections from a retiring Youth Services Manager at Deschutes Public Library on “doing it right.”

Every issue of the OLAQ takes a tremendous amount of work from many people. Many, many thanks go to the contributing authors who came together to share their thoughts and experiences. A sincere thank you also goes to OLA Communications Committee Chair Charles Wood, as well as the twelve copy editors listed in the back matter. I also want to acknowledge Julie Weiss, who continues to provide remarkable graphic production for the *Quarterly*. Thank you all!

Elaine Hirsch
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Find Ways to Say Yes:

How we Made our Library More Inclusive Through Removing Barriers to Membership

by **Kirsten Brodbeck-Kenney**
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KIRSTEN BRODBECK-KENNEY is the director of Driftwood Public Library in Lincoln City, Oregon. Prior to moving to Oregon in late 2010, Kirsten was a children's librarian and branch manager with the Free Library of Philadelphia, and holds an MLIS from Drexel University in Philadelphia. Kirsten is the newly elected ALA Council Representative for the Oregon Library Association and co-chairs the OLA Intellectual Freedom Committee. She is also a member of the ALA Rainbow Round Table (formerly GLBT Round Table) Over the Rainbow book list committee. In her free time you are likely to find her tinkering with her hi-fi or attempting to read and knit at the same time.

Creating policies that are equitable and inclusive can often mean an iterative process of incremental changes that slowly evolve the culture of an organization. One example of this is the way that Driftwood Public Library, a medium-sized coastal library in Lincoln City, changed its library card policies to better serve members of the community experiencing homelessness or without a fixed address.

In 2013, Driftwood Public Library (DPL) began an initiative to look at our policies and procedures with fresh eyes, and modify those policies that were presenting significant barriers to individuals who wished to use the library. Library card policies quickly rose to the top. At the time, the library required official photo ID and proof of address to obtain a card, as well as the contact information for a third party who did not live with the applicant. The proof of address requirement was very stringent, requiring a lease or utility bill in the person's name. It presented a great deal of difficulty for individuals who had recently moved to the city or who did not have any accounts in their own name. A scenario that library staff encountered more than once concerned adult children who had returned to Lincoln City to care for an ailing family member. Because they did not own or lease property in the area, were in town for an extended visit with an uncertain endpoint, and were usually staying with the family member, proving residency was a surprisingly difficult hurdle.

The requirement of third party contact information was ostensibly to provide a point of contact for extremely overdue items, but in practice, many patrons were unwilling or unable to provide contact information for a third party. At the same time, the Circulation Coordinator reported that the requirement was rarely—if ever—helpful in recovering items that had been checked out and not returned.

In early 2014, with the approval of the board, DPL significantly expanded the options for patrons to prove residency by including mail postmarked within the last 30 days, as well as a host of other forms of identification. The library also removed the third party contact



requirement for new patrons. To further protect patron privacy, existing third party contact information was deleted from all Driftwood patron accounts.

Round Two

The changes in the card policies were readily embraced by library staff, who reported much more pleasant interactions with potential new patrons, as well as a greater number of cards that could be issued on first inquiry. The number of library cards issued surged, from 1,349 issued in 2013 to 1,482 in 2014.

One population remained that was unassisted by these new policies, however. There was little in the policy to address individuals who had no fixed address or who were residing in a local shelter. DPL had long offered a “guest card” to visitors to the area, but the guest cards were quite strictly controlled: only one could be issued per family, they were only good for 30 days, and there was a limit of two items at a time on the card. Patrons with guest cards also could not place holds. The guest card was originally conceived as a solution for vacationers confronted by a few days of bad weather, and for that it worked admirably—but for patrons experiencing homelessness, it was a poor substitute for true library access.

One patron who was residing in a local shelter laid out the issue for staff in a way that was hard to ignore: she had three children, and with the limits imposed by the card, there was no way she could check out enough materials to satisfy them all. Additionally, her oldest child was reading books from a series, and the next one in the series was held by another consortium library—which meant that she could not access it. Since reading was one of the few ways her children could entertain themselves for free, the lack of access was a major problem. Stated bluntly, she felt the library was treating her and her family as second-class citizens, even though they lived in the library’s service area.

At the same time, the DPL Outreach Coordinator attended trainings on bringing a trauma-informed approach to library services. What does this mean? In short, a trauma-informed library takes into account the fact that many patrons, particularly patrons experiencing homelessness, may have traumatic experiences in their past that affect the way they interact with library staff. For example, people who have experienced homelessness may have had many experiences with government bureaucracies denying needed services. Subsequently learning that they also cannot receive a library card due to their housing situation may be the last straw, provoking a strong negative reaction or just leaving them feeling completely demoralized. By focusing on providing library services in a positive and non-judgmental way that conveys safety and caring, the experience of using the library can be more enjoyable and safer for everyone.

The rest of the DPL staff learned about the concept of trauma-informed librarianship at an in-service in early 2015. Out of this in-service emerged a clearly stated staff goal: “find ways to say yes.” In broad terms, this meant that staff committed to “leading with the positive” whenever possible during patron interactions. “You can’t eat in here” became “You are welcome to eat in the lobby.” “You can’t check this out, this is a reference book,” became “You are welcome to use this book here in the library; however, since it’s a reference book, it needs to stay here.” On a policy level, staff agreed that it was time once again to revisit card policies with an eye toward removing barriers—staff wanted more ways to say “yes” to those seeking library cards.



By May of 2015, the library director, with staff assistance, was ready to propose several major changes to the library card policy. Because the library is funded by local tax dollars, the challenge was in finding ways to make it easier to obtain a card, while still ensuring residence in the library's service area. The proposal favored a multi-pronged approach to providing library services to patrons experiencing homelessness:


- 1) Individuals without a permanent address who were residing in a shelter or similar residential program would be granted full-privilege library cards by DPL upon providing a letter on program letterhead, signed by the program director or their designee.
- 2) A new, robust "guest card" program was proposed: The expiration date on the guest cards would be extended to 90 days, and these cards would be eligible for indefinite renewals in person at the circulation desk. The "one card per family" rule was rescinded, making guest cards available on a one-per-person basis. Guest cards, by consortial agreement, could also now place holds and access online resources. These cards would still be limited to two check-outs at a time.
- 3) In addition, the director proposed that, after 120 days, a patron with a guest card in good standing (no unpaid lost items) could request in person at the circulation desk to have it upgraded to a full-privilege card. Staff judged that four months was long enough to establish that a patron was living in the area for the long term.

The proposed changes would allow visitors and individuals experiencing homelessness alike to continue to use the library while they visited or established residency in Lincoln County, while still maintaining the library's responsibility to county residents. If an individual moved away or their vacation ended, their card would expire after 90 days.

The library board accepted the proposed changes unanimously, and they were rolled out in May of 2015. The result? Greater patron satisfaction, less stress on frontline staff, and more library cards issued—1,499 in 2015, an all-time high. The library administration was prepared to accept an increase in lost items, but no such increase materialized.

Onward and Upward

The assessment of library access and policy equitability did not end here. In the years since DPL rolled out the new library card policies, the iterative process of recognizing an issue and subsequently removing barriers has continued. Last summer, DPL modified library card policy to make it easier for minors to obtain a library card, and in the fall of 2018, the library and Lincoln City Council took the major step of removing overdue fines across the board.

The reaction to almost every change the library has made toward equitable service has been, "We should have done this sooner!" And indeed, there are times when sweeping and thorough policy changes are the best choice—but sudden change does not have to be the only way. Without the success that followed DPL's first foray into more equitable policies, the second round of changes might not have been possible—and without that successful program, even more major changes like removing fines would not have seemed like the logical and obvious next step. As librarians and as service providers, sometimes the surest path to success is one in which we keep doing the next right thing, knowing that as we find ways to say "yes," another next right thing is just around the corner. 



Read me a Story!

by Jennifer Croft
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JENNIFER CROFT is the Director of Extended Services Office (ESO), part of the Coos County Library Services District. ESO oversees the County's digital collection, its IT needs and its Outreach Library. She earned her MLIS from Kent State University, after obtaining her undergraduate degree in Sociology from Weber State University. Jennifer currently lives in Coos Bay with her husband and two pittie mixes. For fun she loves to take her Jeep out on the dunes, play her PS4, and of course, read.

Read me a Story! is an early literacy program partnership between the Coos County Library Service District's Extended Services Office (ESO) and the Shutter Creek Correctional Institute. The aim is to reach at-risk children and their caregivers in an unconventional way by building on existing relationships to encourage a love of reading. This gives the child their best opportunity for future educational success, and the prisoner an invaluable opportunity to be a positive influence in a child's life.

This program was conceived as a new way to use the State Library of Oregon's Ready to Read grant. The library I manage (the outreach library in Coos County) doesn't have any direct patrons who are children, so the Ready to Read grants we're awarded are traditionally used at our County Fair where we help promote our district's activities and reinforce their early literacy efforts. While we wanted to continue to have a presence at the fair, I thought there might be room in our budget for a second program that targeted outreach patrons directly. Members of my staff (Chad Brownson and Stacey Nix) and I were brainstorming over this notion, and I remembered an ALA presentation from 2017 where Anne Plazeak from the Medina County Library in Ohio had built a grant-funded program that inspired this one and *Read me a Story!* was born.



Read me a Story! helps spread childhood literacy to our society's most vulnerable at-risk population: the children of convicted, incarcerated felons. Our goal is to encourage a love of reading that will place them on a path leading toward future educational and economic success, and we do it by building on the preexisting close relationships between children and their incarcerated loved ones. Effectively, finding a silver lining in a difficult situation.

The program was set up so I could meet twice with the prisoners. The first meeting could probably be described as an orientational or instructional meeting. During this meeting, I model a storytime for the prisoners. When you picture this, picture me, the unconventional magenta-haired librarian sitting at a conference table with half a dozen prisoners reading them children's stories. *Green Pants* by Kenneth Kraegel was a particularly engaging choice. The inmates answered questions about the story when prompted, laughed at the jokes I made while reading, and diligently counted items and called out color names in the pictures where I indicated. It was hilarious fun! Fun with a purpose. Some of the men there had never read a book to their child at all. Still others, unless otherwise instructed, would have ended up only reading the words, then turning the page. They needed to know it was okay to go off-script, and that it would be even better still to be a little silly. Reading to your children can be deeply personal, so they also needed to trust me in order to show vulnerability to their children during their recordings. The best way I could think of to accomplish that was to do it first. This was hugely daunting to me. Did I mention that aside from reading to my own children, I have *never* done a storytime before? Letting them see my nervousness helped them quite a bit. Also during this first meeting, I distributed copies of the books they had chosen for their children, as well as age-based early literacy and reading aloud tips for them to live with overnight and practice until I came back the next day to do the recording.

The second visit is where I record the inmates reading. At Shutter Creek, we record in the children's visiting room. There are bright and colorful murals on the walls and hand-made wood furniture. It's perfect for our purposes because it comes across as less institutional in the recordings and the inmate and I can be alone to do the recording (so they feel less pressure from fellow inmates, etc.), but are still observed through glass windows in the wall to maintain security. Before we begin the recording, we chat a little to put them at ease and answer any additional questions that pop up. After the recording is finished, they return the book so I can send it to their child.



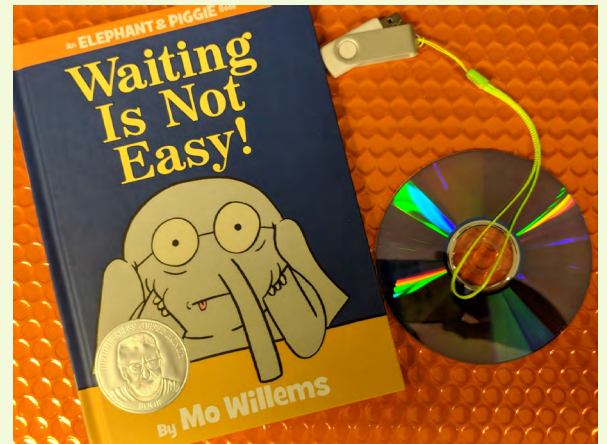
An exciting new early literacy program offered by the Coos County Library Service District's ESO Outreach library!
Made possible by the State Library of Oregon's Ready to Read grant 2019

Read me a story!

Even while apart, you can make a positive impact on your child's future by encouraging a love of reading.

Each care package contains:

- The book you chose for your child
- Video recordings of you reading the book on DVD & a flash drive
- Important information about early literacy for your child's caregiver



Available Books:

- **Demolition by Sally Sutton** - What's even more exciting to preschoolers than seeing big machines that build things? Watching the massive ones that tear them down!
- **Always by Emma Dodd** - One little elephant learns that a parent's love is unconditional.
- **Far Apart, Close in Heart by Becky Birtha** - Children can experience many emotions when a parent is in jail or prison. In this important book, young readers will learn that even when it feels like nothing can get better again, there are ways they can improve their circumstances.
- **Waiting Is Not Easy by Mo Willems** - Gerald is careful. Piggie is not. Piggie has a surprise for Gerald, but he is going to have to wait for it. And Wait. And wait some more...
- **Pearl by Molly Idle** - An original mermaid tale about how small, persistent actions can achieve great things.
- **A box of Butterflies by Jo Rooks** - When Ruby asks Robot if he loved the story as much as she did, he tells her that he doesn't know what love is. If it's not something he can see, then what could it be?
- **Goodnight, Goodnight, Construction Site by Sherri Duskey Rinker** - As the sun sets behind the big construction site, all the hardworking trucks get ready to say goodnight. One by one, Crane Truck, Cement Mixer, Dump Truck, Bulldozer, and Excavator finish their work and lie down to rest-so they'll be ready for another day of rough and tough construction play!
- **Last Stop on Market Street by Matt de la Pena** - Every Sunday after church, CJ and his grandma ride the bus across town.
- **How to be a Lion by Ed Vere** - In this timely and charming story about the importance of being true to yourself, mindfulness, and standing by your friends, we meet Leonard, a lion, and his best friend Marianne, a...duck.
- **Green Pants by Kenneth Kraegel** - For kids who march to their own drum or are especially attached to a comfort object here is a completely adorable character who wears his singularity in style.

Wonderfully and unexpectedly, I then found that after the inmates learned that they were in possession of the exact books going to their children, they began writing loving messages to them on the inside book covers and dust jackets. These touching written sentiments were often done with beautiful, artistic flourish and are certain to make these books even more prized by the children who receive them.

The books are then sent to the intended children in a cute care package they receive in the mail. Also in the package are two copies of the recorded reading, one on DVD, the other on a flash drive. Early literacy information and tips are also enclosed for the child's caregiver. Everything in the package is bright, colorful, and cheerful, and the child's name is printed on the DVD.

Even at this early stage of the program, the feedback I've received has been incredible. These are a few of the comments from the survey responses I've collected:

I feel that it helped me feel more comfortable to read to my child.

I learned that reading to my grandsons in an animated voice, and making the sounds of the equipment (construction) is entertaining to them and myself also.

I believe it to be a perfect use of resources for both the library and the DOC (Department of Corrections). Also, I think it should be instituted in all Oregon prisons.



It is important to show our young ones about libraries and showing them how to read so they can read early and enjoy it.

Since I sent my daughter the video and book, my daughter likes to grab books now and tells my siblings to read to her. Before it was just watching TV, so I see a bigger interest in reading and learning to sound out words.

I've learned that it is important for kids to start to read at an early age and also learned new skills on how to read to kids.

I learned that the library is more than just checking out books. I think it is great that they are reaching out to those of us incarcerated and be able to connect with our kids through library programs.

These are some of the comments on the Department of Corrections' Facebook post:

Awesome ... hope DRCI can start something like this. —Cindy Nye

What a great program ... and thank you State Library for funding this. —Bev Porter Moltzau


What a great program. Keep innovating Shutter Creek! —Randy Greer

Such a positive impact. Very important for not only the child but the AIC (Adult in Custody). —Melissa Faber

This is nothing but good. —Cedric Jackson

Despite my patience-trying, near-boundless, excited optimism, I could not do this program on my own. After I explained my idea to Corey Fhure, the superintendent of the Shutter Creek Correctional Institution, he referred me to Julie Martin, the Correctional Rehabilitation Manager. Ms. Martin has been a fantastic partner! She advertised the program in Shutter Creek's newsletter, selected participants, helped them choose their books, arranged for a good space to record the readings, and was even able to get authorization for the inmates to wear civilian clothes so the recordings don't feel quite so prison-y.

Also, vitally important were the Director, and Children's Librarian from the Coos Bay Public Library, Sami Pierson and Rebekah Westmark. I am not a children's librarian and have never been one. So, I reached out to Ms. Westmark for advice. She helped me build a selection of titles for the inmates to choose from, and she even let me observe her storytime program when my confidence waned.

Do you have a prison in your service area? Your outreach librarian might be hearing from me soon. Ms. Martin spread the word among her counterparts in other facilities and there has been considerable interest. I'd love to collaborate with other Oregon librarians to share this unique early literacy program. If you're interested in participating but haven't heard from the prison in your area yet, feel free to get in touch with me and we can approach them together. We have an opportunity to make a truly positive difference in the lives of these children and their incarcerated loved ones. 



Notes From an Equity Fellow:

Casual Diversity and ALA Conferences Spark Enthusiasm

by **Ayn Reyes Frazee**
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An elementary school librarian for Portland Public Schools, AYN REYES FRAZEE takes seriously her responsibility to the 452 students she serves. “Developing our small but mighty collection to include beautiful new books with characters who look like me and my students has been a welcome challenge,” she wrote. In addition to her work in the school library, she serves on the board of the Oregon Association of School Libraries and as a reviewer for Kirkus. Ayn is a 2019 ALSC Equity Fellow. You can see what she’s up to on her library Instagram: @BeachElemLibrary

I’m a school librarian, and I love connecting students with books they get excited about reading—we’ve all had that thrilling moment of handing a patron a book and seeing their eyes light up with recognition and enthusiasm. There’s nothing better! Connecting readers with books that resonate is our goal and our joy. A recently awarded fellowship opened the doors to new conference experiences for me, deepening my understanding of the many diverse and authentic voices in children’s literature while also highlighting the places where there is room for growth.

The children’s and YA publishing world has increased the representation of diversity in book characters gradually over the years but still has a long way to go (CCBC, 2019). When I stepped into the role of librarian at my elementary school five years ago, I noticed that books on the shelves representing black and brown characters seem to stick to a narrow range of topics and skew toward the stereotypical—books featuring African American kids frequently have Civil Rights and basketball themes and books featuring Latino children portray characters struggling with immigration issues. While these topics are important and do represent the interests and experiences of some of my students, I found myself searching for books featuring main characters who are Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) in the ways that white characters have been represented for years: solving mysteries, creating art, navigating friend drama and more. Finding high-quality books featuring this type of



casual diversity—meaningful diversity that is incorporated into a book but isn't the focus of the story—became my new crusade. Even more challenging is finding books featuring diverse characters that are written by diverse authors, a movement that has been aptly named Own Voices. Many representations of racially and ethnically diverse, disabled, LGBTQ, and religious characters are written by authors who don't come from the groups they're writing about. My students have noticed the new additions to our collection and are checking them out to read with gusto. My goal is to enhance inclusion for all and especially to help students of color feel seen and heard at school. Students in the school where I teach speak at least 11 different languages, and the majority of our student body is made up of children of color. It's incredibly important to infuse culturally relevant components into everything we do and recognize that culture is a resource.

I became aware of the Association for Library Services to Children (ALSC) Equity Fellowship through an Oregon Association of School Libraries listserv post last fall. ALSC is a division of ALA, the American Library Association. The Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) Task Force within ALSC was seeking ethnically and racially diverse library professionals who demonstrated a commitment to equity, diversity and inclusion in their personal or professional life, a capacity for leadership, and are providing direct services to children. In my application essay, I wrote about my work seeking out and selecting books for my school library collection, as well as my experience as a Mexican-American school librarian. I received a phone call later in the fall from a member of the task force letting me know that I had been selected as one of only six ALSC Equity Fellows in the country for 2019–2020. The news was exhilarating, and I was thrilled to learn that the fellowship includes membership for two years in ALA and financial support to attend the 2019 ALA Midwinter Conference in Seattle and the ALA Annual Conference in Washington, D.C. In addition, the EDI Task Force connected me with a mentor from ASLC who can help me get more involved in the organization and navigate the complex conference schedules.

I met the other five EDI Fellows for the first time in Seattle at the ALA Midwinter Conference in January 2019. After an inspiring opening featuring Melinda Gates, followed by some overwhelming time exploring the enormous exhibit hall, I connected with the Fellows as well as the members of the EDI Task Force who had originated the idea for the fellowship at an after-hours event held on the top floor of the beautiful Seattle Public Library. It felt incredible to meet library professionals from all over the country who had also been awarded the EDI Fellowship. I have never before been in a professional setting where all of the library staff I was meeting with were people of color. It was both empowering and made me recognize how exclusive library work can sometimes feel as a woman of color. Despite being Latina, I hold a huge amount of white privilege that impacts my work and my world. My time at ALA Midwinter prompted much self-reflection as well as ignited my interest in continuing the specific equity, diversity, and inclusion work that ALSC has begun.

Around six months later, I boarded a plane headed for Washington, D.C.—less than a day after I finished closing my school library for the summer. I ran into many people I'd met and connected with at the Midwinter Conference and felt more confident that I was where I belonged. Addresses and sessions headlined by YA and children's authors like Jason Reynolds, Yuyi Morales, Tomi Adeyemi, and other talented writers and literacy experts punctuated a packed conference schedule. Planned meet-ups with the other EDI Fellows and my mentor throughout the conference kept me from feeling too overwhelmed. One experience organized by the EDI task force and mentors was attending the 50th anniver-



sary Coretta Scott King Awards breakfast; it was a privilege and a highlight of my first ALA Annual Conference. The audience laughed and cried with award winners as they shared their acceptance speeches, and the importance of books with which children can relate was underscored repeatedly. I also attended the Pura Belpré Awards Celebración and was in awe of the closeness that everyone in the room felt as award winners put out a call-to-action to protect our most vulnerable children. The conference was at times surreal when I spotted legendary authors eating bacon at a publisher breakfast or asked a recent Caldecott Honor winner if I could take a selfie with her. I listened and absorbed as much as I could from meetings, author talks, and sessions that I attended and I'm still digesting it all with the help of my copious notes.

I returned to reality from both conferences filled with excitement about new project ideas and a bit overwhelmed by the ambitious task that we as librarians are charged with: helping users find what they need, interpret, and then synthesize and share it. In my case, I am more motivated than ever to connect my students with books they can feel proud to read. Nearly every author I heard speak at both conferences attributed their push to write stories to a response to not seeing characters that shared their experiences or skin color, in books they read growing up or in school. I want my students to write books because they are inspired by the wave of diverse characters crowding our library shelves, not because there is a hole where these characters should be. In my own small circle of influence, this will look like continuing to weed books that uphold racist, sexist, ableist, homophobic or other inexcusable messages—even if they're beloved classics. It will also look like having student voices involved in my selection process, and like taking extra time to research new acquisitions and support books and publishers that promote Own Voices. All this while being careful to avoid tokenism and optical allyship. It's a huge undertaking, and I will likely make mistakes along the way, but I know that I have a fantastic group of new friends in ALSC to bounce ideas off of, a wealth of experiences from two conferences to draw from, and colleagues here at home who will support this important work.

While the status of the ALSC Equity Fellowship for next year is still unknown, you can find the most up-to-date information on all ALSC awards, fellowships, and scholarship opportunities at: <http://www.ala.org/alsc/awardsgrants/scholarships> 

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Writing African American History Into Wikipedia

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Diana Park is a Science librarian at Oregon State University. She started at OSU in the fall of 2018 and immediately joined the team in planning OSU's first Wikipedia editathon. She is currently working on a project to research retention of Wikipedia editors among underrepresented groups. She received her MLIS from the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee.



TIAH EDMUNSON-MORTON is the director of the Oregon Hops and Brewing Archives at Oregon State University's Library, which was established in 2013 and is the first of its kind in the country. In addition to her curatorial work, she oversees other programs in the Special Collections and Archives Research Center. She teaches courses on library and archival research, oral histories, and university history; manages the department's exhibits and internship programs; and coordinates social media and outreach. She has an MLIS from San José State University, MA in English Literature from Miami University, and is a Certified Archivist.



As the world's largest information database, Wikipedia is a familiar resource for many people. Given the ubiquity of Wikipedia articles on various topics, it has become a first stop for conducting online searches. However, there is a gap of information within Wikipedia related to African American history, and addressing Wikipedia's well-documented racial bias should be a priority for librarians and archivists ("Racial bias on Wikipedia," 2019). In February of 2019, Oregon State University Libraries and Press hosted a Wikipedia Editathon, "Writing African American History into Wikipedia."

Editathon

The word "editathon" is a combination of the words "edit" and "marathon." It is attributed to Mike Peel and Thomas Dalton, organizers of an editathon at the British Library in 2011 (Snyder, 2018, p. 122). Since then, editathons have been held at various libraries, museums, and archives to highlight their collections. These partnerships between cultural heritage groups and Wikipedia were seen as mutually beneficial, as it brought more awareness about an institution to the public, and also added new, robust information to Wikipedia ("Our Story," n.d.).

Editathons became more well known with the rise of [Art + Feminism](#) events. The inaugural Art + Feminism Wikipedia Edit-a-thon was held in 2014 and since then over 500 events have been held worldwide with thousands of people participating ("Our Story," n.d.). Art + Feminism highlighted the gender gaps present in Wikipedia by focusing events on adding information about women, as well as encouraging women to participate in editing. Only 15 percent of Wikipedia editors identify as women (Lih, 2015), consequently, editathons have had the dual purpose of adding new content and diversifying the pool of editors. Along with Art + Feminism, other Wikipedia user groups and nonprofits have sponsored and organized editathons focused on closing gaps within Wikipedia coverage including [Wiki Loves Women](#), [AfroCROWD](#), [500 Women Scientists](#), and [Wiki Loves Pride](#), just to name a few. We partnered with AfroCROWD for our editathon, for various reasons that we will explain further into the article.

History and Demographics

The site for this case study is Oregon State University, located within the traditional homelands of the Mary's River or Ampinefu Band of Kalapuya. Following the Willamette Valley Treaty of 1855 (Kalapuya etc. Treaty), Kalapuya people were forcibly removed to reservations in Western Oregon ("Termination & Restoration," n.d.).

A predominantly White institution (PWI), OSU is located in Corvallis, Oregon, a town of approximately 59,000 residents. OSU is a public land, space, sea, and sun grant university and nearly a third of all students are enrolled in engineering programs. In the fall of 2018, the student enrollment (headcount) was 30,986 (Oregon State University, 2018). Only 433 students at OSU identified as "Black" (one or more races), for a total of 1.4 percent of the student body. The 2018 census estimates showed that Corvallis had a population of 58,641 and 1.1 percent identified as "Black or African American alone" (U.S. Census Bureau, 2018).

A *Portland Tribune* article stated in 2017, "There's been little effort, until recently, to shed light on black history in Oregon" (Hewitt, 2017). A basic understanding of Oregon's White supremacist history sheds light on the state's low percentage of African Americans



today and also helps explain why online coverage of Pacific Northwest African American history is lacking.

In the 1800s, as White colonizers moved westward across what is now the United States, many of them brought racist ideologies from the eastern part of the country. The Oregon Territory passed its first Black Exclusion Law in 1844, and in 1859 went on to become the only state inducted into the union with racial exclusion laws in its constitution (Hewitt, 2017). As writer and public historian, Walidah Imarisha, stated in a 2014 NPR interview, “Black folks did not come to Oregon because they got the message loud and clear that Oregon did not want them. In many ways, the racial exclusion clause was like a flashing neon sign at the borders that says you’re not welcome here” (Lewin, 2014). The chilling effect that the exclusion laws had on migration may be extrapolated by comparing migration numbers between Oregon and California: between 1850 and 1860 the black population in California increased by 4,000, while in Oregon the increase was a mere 75 (Brooks, 2004).

Over the next century various push and pull factors affected black migration into and out of Oregon. For example, many historians believe Oregon had the highest per capita Ku Klux Klan membership in the 1920s, undoubtedly designed to push African Americans out of the state (Lewin, 2014). A large influx of African Americans came to Oregon in the 1930s and 1940s when they were recruited to work in Portland, building ships; during these two decades, the black population in Portland increased by 3000 percent (Brooks, 2004). From the late 1800s to the mid-1900s, another deterrent for all people of color was the presence of an estimated 24 Sundown Towns in Oregon (“The Oregon Black Laws,” n.d.). Widespread throughout the U.S., these towns barred black people, and often all people of color, from being in town after sundown. *The Green Book*, a travel guidebook for African Americans published in the mid-1900s, specifically warned travelers to avoid Sundown Towns.

The story continues as gentrification pushes out large numbers of lower-income residents; for example in Portland 10,000 African Americans were pushed out between 2000 and 2010 (Solomon, 2016). Today, the percentage of people who identify as “Black or African Americans alone” in Oregon hovers at about two percent, while nationally the percentage is closer to 13.4 percent (U.S. Census Bureau, 2018).

Planning and Preparation

In the early fall of 2018, we began planning for the Wikipedia Editathon. Two librarians and one archivist, the authors of this article, formed a small team to decide on workflows and individual roles. The team initially discussed various ideas for an editathon theme, but quickly settled on African American history in the Pacific Northwest, which could be incorporated into OSU’s annual African American History Month activities in February. In addition, we all felt that Pacific Northwest African American history is not well known, even among residents of the Pacific Northwest, and so we focused on local history. None of the team members identify as African American, which made the first step, establishing partnerships, vitally important.

We began by reaching out to the OSU Office of Diversity and Cultural Engagement, to discuss our plans and get feedback about the proposed event, location, and timing. From here, we were connected with the director of the Black Cultural Center on campus, and received additional input and advice.



Next, we reached out to the Facebook group Wikipedia + Libraries (renamed recently to Wikimedia + Libraries). Members of the Facebook group recommended partnering with AfroCROWD. After we reached out to AfroCROWD, they quickly partnered with us and guided us through much of the process via two scheduled online meetings and numerous emails. They created a [Wikipedia:Meetup](#) page for our event, which included detailed information. Everyone who registered also received a reminder the day before the event.

The bulk of preparation activities included identifying pre-existing Wikipedia articles and preparing article stubs. We began by identifying stub or start-class articles in Wikipedia relating to African American history and the Pacific Northwest; a stub is an article that is too short to be considered encyclopedic coverage of a subject and a start-class article is a step above a stub, but still needs considerable work (“Wikipedia,” 2019b). Then, through a literature review, we identified people, events, and locations that did not have articles in Wikipedia. We identified 13 possible article topics for the editathon: Susie Revels Cayton (no article), Robin Holmes (no article), 24th Infantry Regiment (start-class article), Beatrice Morrow Cannady (stub article), James D. Saules (no article), Avel Gordy (start-class article), DeNorval Unthank (start-class), Robert E. Lee Folkes (no article), Urban League of Portland (no article), Albina District (no article), Albina Riot of 1967 (no article), Jacob Vanderpool (no article), Lizzie Weeks (no article).

We split the 13 articles between the three team members. Each team member was tasked with gathering information about each article topic, including books, etc. If the topic did not yet have an entry, the team member was tasked with creating a stub article before the event. To view these individual articles go to <https://tinyurl.com/y3x3ly72>.

The Day of the Editathon

On the day of the event, small “piles of information” about each pre-identified topic were centrally located in the room. Participants were invited to review the topics and take a pile of information back to their workstation. Nearly every participant in our editathon was new to Wikipedia editing, and this material cut down on the barriers to accomplishing the day’s mission, which was to “add at least once sentence or other contribution to Wikipedia about a [notable](#) person of African descent or a place or cultural item associated with the African Diaspora” (“Wikipedia,” 2019a). Two participants chose to create new articles for the editathon, on [Roosevelt Credit](#) and [Jeremiah Burke Sanderson](#). And several other participants worked on Wikipedia articles that were not pre-identified.

The editathon took place on Friday, February 8, 2019, from 2:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m. in the Valley Library computer classroom. There were 28 participants who added nearly 6,000 words during the event. Music played and there were light refreshments as people entered the room.

Attendees were asked to sign in as they arrived. They were given a slip of paper that included a space for their Wikipedia username—we would later use this to make sure their username appeared on the Wikipedia event dashboard for tracking purposes. The event started with a short presentation that included online training videos on how to start editing Wikipedia provided by AfroCROWD.

The last 30 minutes of the event was spent discussing the edits made by the participants, interesting facts discovered during their research, and their overall experience. Not all editathons dedicate time for a concluding group discussion, but we felt that it was valuable



as it provided a time for participants to bond over their shared experience and learn about the various topics that were added to Wikipedia.

Promotion

The event was promoted, starting one month before the event, through print flyers, designed by a student graphic designer. Other avenues of promotion included social media and faculty listservs. A [LibGuide](#) was created, and all promotional materials included a link to the LibGuide for more information. We also promoted the event with a short presentation delivered at a monthly OSU Black Student Union meeting at the Black Cultural Center.

Takeaways and Recommendations

This was the first editathon organized at Oregon State University, and as the organizers, we did not know if the campus community would be interested in the event. Surprisingly, attendance at our event exceeded our expectations. The participants were mostly faculty and staff, so for future events, we would like to see more student participants.

Most of the participants stayed until the end of the event and engaged in the post-editing discussion. Interestingly, the majority of the participants were women and subsequently chose to edit topics related to women. As mentioned previously, the demographics of Wikipedia editorship skews heavily male, so we were pleasantly surprised when more women attended the event than men. The event was not advertised specifically towards newcomers, but the majority of our participants did not have a Wikipedia account when they arrived. Because we had so many newcomers, we learned that we should have prepared for difficulties with IP addresses. Only six new usernames can be created on an IP address within a 24-hour period. We reached this limit within the first hour of the event, but were able to circumvent the rule by having participants use their cellphones—using their data, and not the library's WiFi—to create accounts. If you are expecting a lot of first-time editors, encourage them to create an account before the event, or look into requesting a temporary exception to the IP limit.

We did not involve students in the promotion of the editathon. In the future, we will look for ways to involve library student employees early in the process, hire a student intern, and/or reach out and engage with students in the Black Student Union. We are also exploring the possibility of hosting future events at the Black Cultural Center as it might be seen as a more accessible place for students.

We strongly suggest partnering with AfroCROWD or another user group or nonprofit. We attribute much of the success of our first editathon to their leadership, guidance, assistance, and planning. In addition, we recommend promoting the event through department listservs in advance. Over half of our participants were faculty and staff, which we attribute to listserv promotions. One faculty member read about the event on a listserv and contacted us for a meeting beforehand to learn how to incorporate editathon participation into her course design.

Although not part of the original plan, our sister library in Nigeria also decided to host an editathon on the same day, at the Federal University of Agriculture, Abeokuta (FUNAAB). The [editathon in Abeokuta](#) was well-attended and involved only librarians from the region and was hosted by Wikimedia Nigeria. We were able to cross-promote our events and strengthen both programs as a result.



Conclusion

Overall, the editathon was successful in training new editors and increasing the diversity of topics in Wikipedia. The information added to Wikipedia has helped provide visibility to people, places, and events that were not well known, but important to Oregon and the greater Pacific Northwest history. We hope to continue our work organizing Wikipedia editathons by adding meaningful information about underrepresented groups, addressing racial bias within Wikipedia, as well as encouraging newcomers to participate and diversify the demographics of Wikipedia editors from the status quo. 🌱

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Figuring Out Where to Start, and How: One Library's DEI Strategies

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Diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) can fall into the category of big, deep thoughts. It can seem daunting to improve DEI at an institutional level. How do we go from abstract, and even overwhelming ideas, to tangible goals and objectives with timelines, budgets, and workflows? At Sherwood Public Library, nestled in the southern end of Portland Metro and Washington County, we implemented specific DEI objectives in our strategic plan and in the Edge Assessment. With a staff of 23 people (11 full-time equivalent employees) serving a community of 22,000 people, we found ways to make the right-sized goals that would stretch our collective and individual comfort zones and still fit within our capacity for staff time and funds.



Sherwood's demographics and diversity are changing, but not as fast as the rest of our region. In a city where 9 out of every 10 people are white and nearly everyone speaks English, it would be easy—perhaps even statistically justifiable—to leave the difficult and often uncomfortable work of diversity, equity, and inclusion to those large libraries situated within urban cores. However, to do so would be antithetical to the shared mission of public libraries and who we need to be in this incredible moment of opportunity where addressing the obstacles to diversity, equity, and inclusion has become a top priority nationwide. At Sherwood Public Library, staff and board members wanted to incorporate DEI objectives into our work as a way to open windows into other backgrounds, cultures, and perspectives—just as much as we wanted to provide mirrors for the diverse members of our own community. What follows is a summary of nearly four years of work on our path towards a more diverse, equitable, and inclusive public library.

Strategic Planning

In the Fall of 2016, Sherwood Public Library staff and Library Advisory Board members began the work of our first strategic plan (<https://www.sherwoodoregon.gov/library/strategic-plan>). We followed the Public Library Association's *Planning for Results* book as our guide and held two community forum sessions to gather public input iteratively. DEI was part of the conversation at the first session, but not the biggest focus. What we didn't expect was in the time between our first and second community forum sessions, the national dialogue drastically changed after the presidential election. Our community and board members came back to the table with conviction toward including DEI priorities in every part of our strategic plan. That conversation led to a new set of value statements embedded with DEI principles and created with staff, board, and community input (<https://www.sherwoodoregon.gov/library/page/library-values>). Three goals with a total of ten objectives are identified in the final plan—with five¹ of the objectives directly relating to DEI work.

Prioritizing DEI in our strategic plan galvanized our work. We now had permission to reallocate dollars and staff time toward goals and objectives related to diversifying the collection, providing staff training, increasing access to the collection and to technology through better signage and equipment, making our library more welcoming to new members of the community, and offering collections and programming in multiple languages. Our annual operating budget of \$1.3 million had no significant increases to take on the work of the strategic plan, and our staffing is lean for the amount of public-facing services and programs we already offered.

The ripple effects since launching our strategic plan have been exciting and invaluable. Our board members have become more engaged in library activities and monitoring our progress in the plan, and they have become stronger advocates for the library's role in the community as leaders in equity work. We have also seen stronger applicant pools for both

¹ Those are: 1c, Diversify the library collection to reflect and engage our growing community. 2b, Library staff will raise awareness of the library's services for everyone, including newcomers, ESL, and non-English speaking patrons. 2d, The library's online presence will be welcoming and inclusive. 3a, The library will be a leader in the community for providing free and equitable access to quality information and learning for all ages. 3b, The library will teach how to seek, evaluate, and use information in a variety of modalities for the spectrum of learning styles and abilities.



board member and staff position recruitments, with applicants often mentioning their interest in the work we are doing as a result of the strategic plan.

Staff Engagement and Recruitment

One of the first steps we took to shift towards applying a DEI lens to our work was to invite Ann Su of the Oregon Humanities Conversation Project to present “What’s in a Label? Thinking about Diversity and Racial Categories” to library staff. The Conversation Project is a long-running series of community conversations hosted by a trained facilitator about a timely and important issue within the facilitator’s area of expertise. Costs are on a sliding scale and a small or medium-sized library could expect to pay \$50–\$375.

The thought of participating in an open discussion about race with your co-workers might make many people cringe, and understandably so. That said, when beginning the work of shifting organizational culture to peer through a DEI lens, race may be the most honest place to start. Race, and subsequently racism, is a social construct that created the oppressive systems and inequitable society that we live and work within today. The *What’s in a Label?* conversation allowed staff the opportunity to identify, reflect on, and openly discuss the effects of implicit bias in a neutral space removed of blame and guilt, setting the stage for future conversations and trainings. Additional programs/trainings staff have attended are included in the sidebar.

We have also applied a DEI lens to our job recruitments. Open job descriptions have been updated to include fluency in a language other than English as a desirable skill and to reduce barriers to applying by modifying the required experience. Our interview questions have always included DEI topics, but now we are looking for DEI skills and awareness to be incorporated into more of the answer—and we score accordingly. It’s not all about library experience anymore.

Collection Development

The scope of the collection at Sherwood Public Library is primarily popular materials. As with many smaller libraries, we depended heavily on standing order lists for years. While these lists remain an efficient tool, the resulting collection demonstrated gaps in Own Voices titles—that is, titles authored by those who share a diverse, minority, or marginalized trait with their protagonist. In its interpretation of Article I of the *Library Bill of Rights* (2006), ALA states that library workers are obligated to “select, maintain, and support access to content on subjects by diverse authors and creators ... this means acquiring materials to address popular demand and direct community input, as well as addressing collection gaps and unexpressed information needs. Library workers have a professional and ethical responsibility to be proactively inclusive in collection development.” Not only that, but our new strategic plan specifically called out the objective to diversify the collection.

The first step we took to ensure Own Voices authors were included within the collection was to reallocate funds for a dedicated budget to diversify our adult fiction. We started as a pilot project with \$1,000. Now, we dedicate over \$3,000 a year to DEI collection development and have broadened the categories to include emerging authors. The fund represents about 20 percent of our total adult fiction budget. Creating a separate fund allowed us to prioritize authors who are marginalized within the publishing industry. Some favorite resources for selecting diverse adult fiction titles include *Books & Boba* (<https://booksandboba.com/>),



Latinx in Publishing (<https://latinxinpublishing.com/>), *World Literature Today* (<https://www.worldliteraturetoday.org/book-review>), and *Foreword Reviews* (<https://www.forewordreviews.com/>).

In 2018, we received a Diversifying Youth Collections Grant through the State Library of Oregon for \$3,000. The grant guidelines stipulated selecting from curated lists. We analyzed each potential addition to our collection for its inclusion of a broad range of voices, perspectives, and authors representing ethnic diversity, all genders and sexualities, and all abilities. We created printed and online reading lists to promote the collection, thanks to the work of a dedicated MLIS intern.

Applying an equity lens to collection development sometimes means taking big leaps for small collections. In 2017, with funding from our Friends of the Library and American Library Association, we decided to take a big leap—to the Guadalajara International Book Fair (Feria Internacional del Libro de Guadalajara, or, FIL). FIL is the largest and most important Spanish language book fair in the world, held annually in Guadalajara, Mexico. Original Spanish language materials that are culturally appropriate are notoriously difficult to acquire in the United States, and attending FIL provides access to over 2,280 publishing houses from 47 countries. With a budget of \$2,200 we acquired 130 titles—and, for a relatively small Spanish language collection, 130 titles significantly revitalized the collection and increased usage.

In 2018, we embarked on a pilot project to develop a new World Languages collection to expand beyond our English and Spanish collections. With data from our school district, we identified the top languages other than English spoken at students' homes. We started small, adding only board books, and in only two additional languages—French and Japanese. These languages were chosen because they are relatively easy to obtain and catalog for English-language speaking and reading staff through vendors,² and French is a common second language. This year we are continuing to expand our World Language collection, adding titles in Simplified Chinese and also adding picture books in the respective languages. Additionally, we are beginning to blend collections, purchasing duplicate copies of bilingual titles for both the World Languages and the English Language collections, exposing patrons to additional languages.

In addition to adding more diverse titles, we've also adjusted our deselection criteria. These items have niche audiences, will not circulate as often, and need more time for patrons to discover them. Many aspects of collection development depend heavily on statistics, and rightly so. However, the work of creating diverse, inclusive collections by applying an equity lens requires a more nuanced approach.

Programming and Events

In smaller, slowly diversifying communities, cultural programming creates a pathway to bring new voices into the community and challenge hegemonic thinking. Beyond promoting literacy, library programs offer face-to-face opportunities for individuals to engage with each other and promote cultural and racial literacy. Library staff sees this already in the



²Tsai Fong Books and Multicultural Books & Videos can provide bibliographic records for titles ordered through them.

multicultural music and dance events we already host. Here's how we expanded our DEI programming efforts:

- Annually since 2016, we present Bilingual Storytime in the Park as a 6-week series in the summer in English and Spanish. We did not have bilingual youth services staff and partnered with bilingual LDS missionary volunteers during our first two years. The events drew both native Spanish and English speaking families. By summer 2019, we were able to contract with an early learning specialist fluent in Spanish and English.
- We provided a fully immersive Spanish-language storytime for 10 weeks starting in April 2019. This was provided by Washington County Cooperative Library Services (WCCLS) and presented by a native Spanish-speaking early literacy specialist.

Additional DEI Trainings

- *Cultural Competence for Library Leaders*, presented by [De Etta Jones](#) at the Public Library Association pre-conference in 2016. We later shared an exercise Jones developed called “Mattering and Marginalization” with our staff at a staff meeting.
- *Cross-Cultural Tours*, organized by [Multi-Cultural Ministries](#) and held throughout the U.S. and Canada. A Portland tour is generally offered about once a year and includes guided tours of a Muslim Mosque, Hindu Temple, Sikh Temple and a Buddhist Temple.
- *Diversity and Cultural Competency Training: Collections & Readers Advisory*, a webinar through *Library Journal* that our library cooperative, Washington County Cooperative Library Services (WCCLS) sponsored.
- *Homeless Training Institute*, presented by Ryan Dowd, author of *The Librarian's Guide to Homelessness*. This training was sponsored by WCCLS. The Oregon State Library has since made the online version of this training available for free to all Oregon libraries[3].
- *Leading with Race* conversations have been held throughout Washington County as part of the presenting the *Leading with Race: Research Justice in Washington County* report and research from the Coalition of Communities of Color.
- *Otherring in the Library*, presented by Sonja Ervin, Equity and Inclusion Manager for Multnomah County Libraries.
- *Operationalizing Equity*, presented by Thomas Bruner of Bruner Strategies, and sponsored by Tualatin Valley Creates (TVC), a regional non-profit supporting the arts in Washington County. TVC frequently has trainings that can be relevant for libraries and priced affordably.
- *Trauma-Informed Care*, presented by Bryce Kozla of WCCLS.
- *Welcoming Diverse Audiences*, presented by Sharifa Johka, Director of Equity at Oregon Shakespeare Festival, sponsored by TVC.



- We added Family Inclusive Storytime in 2018, designed for all ages and abilities. A Youth Services Librarian provides a quieter storytime experience and methods to accommodate special needs.
- Coming Fall 2019, we will be offering our One-on-One Tech Help program in Spanish.

These programs always draw more diverse audiences, bringing together those wanting to learn about cultures other than their own and those who are seeking an opportunity to celebrate their own culture.

Spaces and Pages

Improving the accessibility and welcoming atmosphere of the physical facility and our website to new members of the community are objectives in our current strategic plan. Many of these solutions have been low-cost and low-effort. We are seeing statistical changes in library usage with an increased number of visits and library card registrations, higher circulation, and boosted computer usage. We are on this upswing of library activity, some due, we believe, to our DEI efforts, and some due to other efforts. Anecdotally, we have seen a more diverse audience visiting the library, engaging in the collection, and attending our events. In a library small enough that staff knows all the regulars, anecdotes carry a lot of weight.

- We have made priorities to make all displays diverse and inclusive. Our new checklist reminds us to incorporate formats besides regular books (audio, large print, movies, magazines, graphic novels, picture books, etc.), world languages from both adult and youth collections, representation from all genders—including non-binary, and a diversity of cultures, ethnicities, abilities, body types, generations and ages.
- Our interior wayfinding signage has been improved in phases. The Children’s area now uses signage with pictograms for both non-fiction and picture books arranged by topics to appeal to early readers and English language learners. Directional signs are in English and Spanish. Welcome signs are in multiple languages. We used a mix of professional signage (costing us \$9,000 to redo signage for our 14,000 square foot library) and signs we made ourselves for shelf-talkers and displays.
- We added a Spanish-language webpage portal and are now translating many public-facing print pieces, including policies, into Spanish. We are fortunate to have free translating services through our membership in WCCLS.
- The Edge Assessment helped us identify key ways to increase access to technology. One example is we changed an existing computer station to use adaptive technology, including a large-type keyboard, larger default screen resolution, and a trackball mouse to help accommodate poor vision and reduced fine motor skills. We also have these tools available for checkout through our Library of Things. The keyboard and mouse cost less than \$100 together.



- We are inviting an audit of our facility for ADA access later this year. Our insurer, Citycounty Insurance Services (CIS), offers this service at no additional cost to the employer.

Despite DEI work never being “done,” we’ve decided to put our recent DEI efforts and upcoming projects on our public website (<https://www.sherwoodoregon.gov/library/DEI>). We feel being honest about where we are in the process is part of being welcoming, transparent, and also brave. The more steps we take to increase our DEI efforts, the braver we get to have important conversations, to invite dialogue, and to evaluate our next steps.

Conclusion

To be at the starting line of DEI work is heartening and humbling. The work calls on us to embrace ambiguity and commit to the unending labor of pushing against the inequity in libraries that has resulted from generations of systemic oppression. Still, we are energized by the opportunity to create a space that allows for transformational experiences for all of our patrons. This is simply too compelling a vision for us not to begin. 🌱

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Resources

<https://www.coalitioncommunitiescolor.org/leadingwithrace>

<https://www.deettajones.com/>

<https://www.forewordreviews.com/>

<https://latinxinpublishing.com/>

<https://www.oregon.gov/Library/libraries/Pages/Continuing-Education.aspx>

<http://templetour.weebly.com/registration-773329.html>

<https://www.worldliteraturetoday.org/book-review>



Exploring Multiple Identities in Children's Literature With Project LIT

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See Me

Only in the last 20 years have we seen seeds of intersectional identities planted in children's/young adult literature. Even in this shift, the majority of authors writing books with diverse characters are white. In 2017, 31 percent of published Kidlit contained diverse characters, yet only 7 percent published were written by Black, Latinx, and Native authors combined (Jalissa, 2018).

Rudine Sims Bishop wrote in her essay "Mirrors, Windows, and Sliding Glass Doors" (1990):

Books are sometimes windows, offering views of worlds that may be real or imagined, familiar or strange. These windows are also sliding glass doors, and readers have only to walk through in imagination to become part of whatever world has been created and recreated by the author. When lighting conditions are just right, however, a window can also be a mirror. Literature transforms human experience and reflects it back to us, and in that reflection we can see our own lives and experiences as part of the larger human experience. Reading, then, becomes a means of self-affirmation, and readers often seek their mirrors in books.

I work in the Beaverton School District. Forty-eight percent of our students are white, which means students of color are the majority. Yet, 87 percent of our teachers are white (Oregon Department of Education, 2018). The staff/student ethnicity ratio is problematic for most of our students needing "mirrors" in their learning environment. Until this balances out in districts around Oregon, literature can serve these students in reflective ways, as well as providing windows to peer into each others' lives and cultures.

As a librarian, it is imperative for me to display books in which every student at our middle school can see their reflections. In those same reads, different students will gain empathy for others. Which book will impact which student may not be easy to predict. Ensuring the library is stocked with encouraging stories emphasizing diversity, equity, and inclusion is under my control. How else can I provide mirrors, windows, and sliding glass doors to our learning community? I found a way using the Project LIT model.



Project LIT

Started in 2016 by Nashville high school teacher Jarred Amato, Project LIT (<https://www.facebook.com/pg/projectlitcommunity/about/>) began as a plan to bring culturally relevant books to the classroom and the community. Project LIT groups vary in size and how often they meet. The main rule is to focus on a given list of books highlighting diversity, equity, and inclusion. By the beginning of the 2018–2019 school year, 400 schools in over 40 states (Amato, n.d.) dedicated themselves to the mission of developing diverse collections for diverse readers. As of this writing, the community registered to participate in the next school year has grown to over 1,000 schools in all 50 states, Canada, the United Kingdom, and Italy.

Project LIT in a Middle School

The beauty of running a Project LIT chapter is the flexibility to find what works for your group. When we started at Five Oaks Middle School, we met as an after-school club with sixth to eighth grade students. By winter break, we determined meeting after school hours resulted in inconsistent attendance and difficulty keeping the group accountable. When we returned to school in January, we altered the plan.

For the remainder of the school year, we met during lunch period every Thursday. We closed the library to all other students and Project LIT Book Club participants brought their meal into the space for a solid 30-minute discussion. This also required breaking up



one group into three separate groups due to each grade level having a different lunch period. The change worked to our benefit. Sixth, seventh, and eighth grades each chose a book to focus on for the month. Eighth graders would read more mature titles, Sixth graders focused on middle-grade reads, Seventh graders were somewhere in between, and the book discussions became more age-appropriate.

Club picks were chosen on the first Thursday of the month and discussion would take place on the last Thursday of the month. (If students finished before then, I asked them to choose another Project LIT title, or I would suggest books to complement that month's selection.) On weeks in the middle of the month, we would find current event topics to deliberate or craft fun activities relating to the topic at hand. For example, when we read Jewell Parker Rhodes's *Ghost Boys* we had a discussion about #BlackLivesMatter. When we read Kwame Alexander's book in verse, *Rebound*, we created our own stories using blackout poetry. When the book discussion finished at the end of each month, I asked group members to either write a book review on a Google Slide or film a book review video on Flipgrid.

Readers and Leaders

Project LIT is a group effort. To become a chapter, at least two adults commit to mentoring the group. I was fortunate enough to have two teachers participate with me. But this doesn't mean Project LIT is labor-intensive for the adults. Once the group is established, students are expected to take leadership roles in the group. Obviously, tasks for a sixth-grader will look vastly different from those for a high school senior. Taking responsibility may look like students recruiting for the group, coming up with current event topics, or leading the book discussion.

We've heard the saying "Leaders are readers," but what about the kids who struggle with reading at grade level or shy away from books with lots of pages and small font? It hasn't been a negative issue in our group. In fact, where other book competition clubs focus on the trivia and plot points of the stories, lower level readers in Project LIT gain insight from the weekly discussions. Even if they don't complete the book as quickly as their peers, they press on, feeling comfortable with the topics and contributing their opinions. In the Project LIT group at a neighboring high school, a choice of three books is given per month so readers are sure to find a just-right-pick for themselves.

Project LIT Possibilities

I've mentioned the way Project LIT is run at our school. But what else is possible? Next year, we will partner with other district schools for Project LIT quarterly events. This may be a dinner with a guest speaker, a movie outing, or a Skype visit with an author. With so many titles offered, we plan on sharing the load, purchasing multiple copy sets, and swapping during the school year.

Public Libraries can join the fun, too! Mark Richardson, Young Adult and Reference Librarian at nearby Cedar Mill & Bethany Community Libraries, partnered with our two Beaverton schools. In addition to adding multiple copies of Project LIT selections to their shelves (complete with a Project LIT spine label), Mark hosted a Project LIT evening, open for students to discuss titles. He also set up a reading challenge where students logged completed reads for the chance to win prizes.



Becoming a Project LIT chapter means joining part of a nationwide community. Ideas flow in Facebook groups, Twitter chats, and Google Docs. While many of the chapter leaders are librarians, you will also find Social Studies, Language Arts, History teachers and others in the education field. The tips, hints, and lesson plans I've perused will help me with the curriculum beyond Project LIT.


The Beaverton School District does not employ Teacher-Librarians in their schools. Three District Librarians supervise Library Media Assistants in 53 locations. Because of the freedom in how a Project LIT Book Club is conducted, it's manageable in a paraeducator's schedule. In a certified role, co-teaching with Project LIT will allow topic discussions and activities to go even deeper. Our District Librarian supports us with book orders ready to go and facilitating idea discussions in district meetings.

Student Responses

I sing the praises of Project LIT and its diverse book introductions to anyone who will listen. But don't just take my word for it. These are a few middle school "mirror, window, and sliding glass door" responses to a few of this year's selections:

- "I related to Malú because I know what it's like to be scared to move to a new school." Ella, Sixth grade, reading *The First Rule of Punk* by Celia C. Perez.
- "My mom makes me mad, like Charlie's mom makes him mad." Diana, Eighth grade, reading *Rebound* by Kwame Alexander.
- "Many people I love have died and I relate to many of the feelings Charlie had." Journey, Eighth grade, reading *Rebound* by Kwame Alexander.
- "I learned that you should always have a best friend by your side and be nice to everyone around you." Gracie, Seventh grade, reading *Wishtree* by Katherine Applegate.
- "Thank you for always teaching us different types of genres with windows and mirrors." Oyin, Eighth grade, response to being part of the Project LIT group.

Host a Project LIT Chapter

To find more about the Project LIT Community, follow us on Facebook at: <https://www.facebook.com/projectlitcommunity/> or on: Twitter [@ProjectLitComm](https://twitter.com/ProjectLitComm). Fill out the [Google Form Application](#) here. School libraries need diverse books. Offering students titles in which they can see themselves and step into empathy is the librarian's work toward a compassionate, educated future. 

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Stitching Service Gaps Through Innovative Programming

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SUAD MOHAMED is currently in the role of Time Partner with Multnomah County Library's Human Resources. Prior to that she specialized in project management, qualitative research, programming, content creation, collection management and served on committees tasked to bridge service gaps. She is the first OLA-Leadership Development Scholarship recipient. One of the most rewarding aspects of her job is being able to move communities she's a part of forward.



LISA TAYLOR is delighted to be starting a new chapter in her library career as a youth librarian for Happy Valley Library. She worked for Multnomah County Library for five years, including most recently as a member of the Central Library Information Services team, and as youth librarian for the Albina branch. In addition to co-leading the MCL Sewing Project, she served on MCL's Intellectual Freedom Committee. She earned a B.A. *cum laude* from Pomona College, and her MLIS from Emporia State University. She serves on the Board of the Oregon Library Association Children's Services Division.

Members of Multnomah County's Somali-speaking community frequently asked Somali-speaking library staff about the possibility of a sewing class at the library. Multnomah County Library's Diverse Audiences Committee reported that other immigrant communities were asking about sewing classes as well. Sewing in libraries? Many library systems were already doing it. It was possible, but how could a complex library system make this simple request a reality?

In response to community feedback, staff with an interest in equitable programming wrote a grant proposal, *The Sewing Project*, to create a sewing lab and offer a sewing program for the Somali-speaking community. The proposal was submitted to *Curiosity Kick!*, an annual Multnomah County Library (MCL) grant for creative staff ideas. In 2017, library staff voted *The Sewing Project* the first-place *Curiosity Kick!* grant winner. This was a unique year for MCL, as *Curiosity Kick!* funded two projects that both directly responded to immigrant needs.



Program Development

After being awarded \$10,000 through the competitive annual innovation program, library staff Suad Mohamed and Lisa Taylor co-led a small team of staff from across the system to develop a mobile sewing lab and a pilot sewing course for the Somali-speaking community. The team conducted a community needs analysis that confirmed a strong interest in sewing amongst the Somali-speaking community. They created a project proposal and charter to clarify the project and its goals, and maintained a project timeline. The team developed desired project outcomes to measure the impact of the program. In addition, members selected sewing machines and supplies, and created a storage and travel system for the equipment. The group looked at traditional Somali clothing, determined the scope and goals for the classes, recruited and interviewed sewing instructors, and chose the best neighborhood library locations for the programs based on county demographics. One consideration was space—there was no dedicated space within the system that could be devoted permanently to a sewing lab. Could meeting rooms handle 8 to 10 sewing machines, tables for cutting and ironing, as well the students and instructors? And, would the library’s electrical infrastructure be sufficient to run ten sewing machines and two irons? The team spent time measuring and arranging rooms, and engaged county facilities staff to inspect the circuits at branches to make sure they could handle the power load required.

Connecting with Communities

The team built upon MCL’s work with immigrant populations to create a program that responded to the needs of the Somali-speaking community. MCL’s We Speak Your Language (WSYL) workgroup had laid a strong foundation for this program. The mission of WSYL is to “connect immigrant and refugee communities to the information and resources they need to be successful in the United States” (MCL, 2018). The WSYL group provides bilingual and culturally competent staff, programs, and collections to reflect and serve diverse communities of Spanish, Vietnamese, Chinese and Russian speakers. The Somali-speaking community is a smaller percentage of the Multnomah County’s population, yet one with great need. MCL began to address this gap with a community needs analysis in 2012 (Seon). Thereafter, a Somali cultural competency position was created, and the library hired its first Somali bilingual staff. By the time of the grant, Mohamed had already spent several years building relationships with the Somali-speaking community. The library had regularly scheduled programs, such as *Family Time*, and computer classes in collaboration with Free Geek and the library’s Digital Inclusion Fellow. Without culturally competent bilingual staff and previous outreach efforts, The Sewing Project would have required extensive partnership with community organizations already serving these refugee and immigrant communities.

Having culturally competent staff meant that changes to standard library program procedures were implemented to better serve our target community. For example, the team did not use the library’s online program registration system, choosing instead to register participants via phone. Conducting registration online would have created a barrier in a community where the dominant mode of communication is via phone. In addition, a direct extension was used on flyers, so that participants would reach a Somali speaker instead of a contact center. “A key ingredient is library staff,” states the *Guidelines for Outreach to Immigrant Populations* (EMEIRT, 2015, p.4). In this instance, bilingual staff had the motivation, skills, and knowledge to market the event, sign up participants, and work with contractors unfamiliar with standardized application processes.



In addition to removing language barriers, other steps are necessary to create a welcoming space for immigrants. For instance, in order to create the safest possible environment for vulnerable populations, a “No Photography” policy that includes internal and external communications is recommended. For this particular sewing program, an exception was made with consent from participants to share photos for internal reports due to the personal relationship Mohamed built with the Somali-speaking community. The community needed to trust that the library would not be publishing photographs that could put them or their families at risk. Working successfully with vulnerable communities requires dedicated and culturally competent staff, flexible policies, and a supportive administration. The team’s experiences throughout this process reaffirmed the conclusion of the EMEIRT *Guidelines for Outreach to Immigrant Populations*, “Making the commitment to serve immigrant populations affects every dimension of a library operation” (2015, p. 4).

Working Outside the Dominant Culture

As the library is part of Multnomah County, instructors need to be hired as county contractors. While the Somali-speaking instructors were qualified, they did not have the skills or experience to navigate the paperwork required by the county. Mohamed spent considerable time with potential instructors to assist them in creating the required résumé and program proposal. If your library does not have the means to work with immigrant instructors on an individual basis, are there ways to connect with existing community partners and refer applicants for résumé and application assistance?

The sewing project revealed that the county application process was an unintentional barrier to offering diverse programs at the library. The library was able to hire two Somali-speaking instructors, both of whom had extensive experience teaching sewing. Neither had a résumé or spoke English, and one of them was unable to read. Imagine such a person, highly qualified for the job, navigating your library system. What would it take to include such a person in the workings of your library? What assumptions are present in your employee and volunteer application process? Is your application process accessible to non-native English speakers and other world language speakers? How about those who don’t have access to the Internet or prefer oral to written communication? Is library programming truly being driven by community needs or merely by virtue of who has the skills and privilege to navigate library systems? Sonja Ervin, MCL’s Equity and Inclusion Manager, encourages libraries to examine intentional and unintentional exclusions, and to ask, “Who are we not serving, and who are we serving the least?” (S. Ervin, personal communication, June 17, 2019).

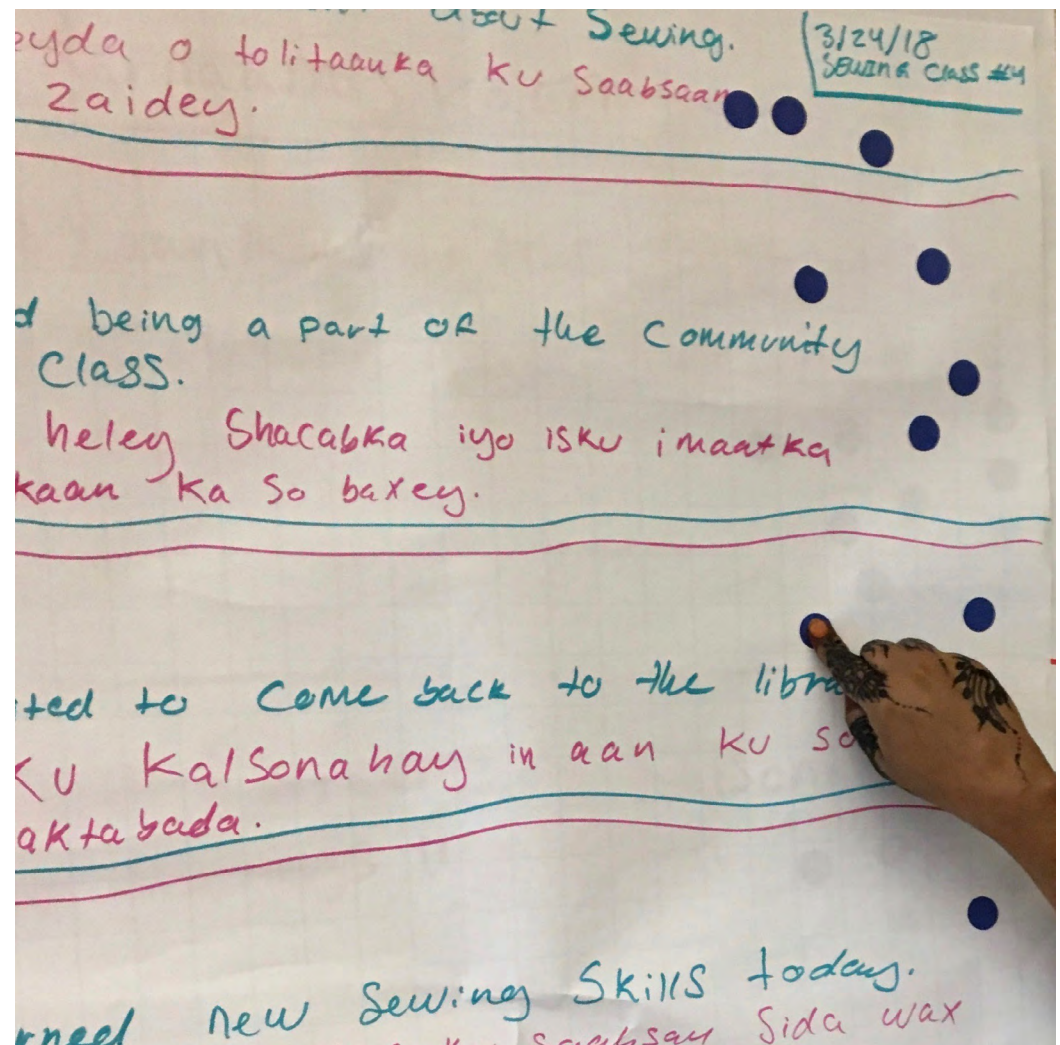
Outcomes

Hiring an instructor from the target community was key to the program’s success. The sewing instructor hired was a local Somali-speaking tailor who owned a small business in the Capitol Hill Library neighborhood. Program participants felt comfortable with him, and loved his classes. One participant commented, “The teacher was incredible, funny, and invested in my learning.” Students learned how to use sewing machines, and basic sewing skills. In addition, they learned how to make simple garments, and traditional Somali outfits. Participants signed up for library cards, reported feeling a sense of community and welcomeness at the library, learned about library services, and gave feedback about future Somali-language programs. One participant told the staff, “We felt very welcomed,” and another remarked, “I’m excited



to come back to the library.” After the program, the staff observed that class participants came more frequently to the library and participated in other library programs.

In order to gather this feedback from participants, the team created posters with phrases written out in Somali. Each participant was given four stickers per program and was able to indicate which of the outcomes statements resonated with them for that program session. The most popular statements were: “I learned new sewing skills;” “I feel welcome and comfortable at the library;” “I enjoyed being a part of the community of this class;” and “I feel more confident about sewing” (see Appendix). The goal was to measure not only sewing skills learned, but also how well the program fulfilled the library’s mission and priorities. The evaluation reflected that this program not only responded to community needs, but also created a space for women who usually don’t feel safe or comfortable using public institutions due to language and cultural barriers. By providing an instructor that shares the same language and culture, that barrier was reduced.




Gathering feedback to measure program outcomes.



Sustainability

Even with a system as innovative as Multnomah County Library, the team discovered that sustainability would be the biggest challenge. The major hurdles to sustainability for the team were identifying a department and staff to take responsibility for maintaining and storing the equipment, and funding the program beyond the one year grant period. MCL was able to continue offering sewing classes in Somali for one year after the grant ended by tapping into other funds. The library also dedicated a portion of its Programs for Diverse Audiences budget to incorporate sewing classes into the regular programming cycles. Hosting a community-specific sewing program on a regular basis involves a heavily involved staff advocate, as well as an instructor that is engaged with the target community. Additionally, library systems would need staff with authority and vision, as well as a corresponding budget for equipment and programming. Institutional support is required for sustainability in order to provide staff and resources for such a program.

Conclusion

The Sewing Project created an opportunity to provide services to an underserved community in direct response to community feedback. It created opportunities for learning and community building at the library, and empowered new voices to shape and deliver library services. It is a testament to the community desire for this program that all the sewing classes were filled and had waiting lists before the first course had even begun. For the opening session at Capitol Hill Library, an additional eight people from the waitlist showed up just in case a spot became available. For MCL, not only was this a marker for success, but it also set up a framework for ongoing progress. Initiatives like *Curiosity Kick!* open doors for programs that benefit not only the communities they're intended for, but also create lasting change as the library deepens its commitment to access for all. Moving forward, a critical question for library systems is how to build upon one-time diversity initiatives like this to make sustained, systemic changes that remove structural barriers to diversity, equity and inclusion. 

Recommended Resources

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Appendix—Project Outcomes and Outputs

Outcome	Library Priority	Indicators: patrons	Number of positive results
Empowering our community to learn sewing skills.	We enable creation and learning. We support learning and literacy across the full spectrum of interests, ages and backgrounds. We assist educators, families and caregivers. We offer programs, materials and tools of creation to people who have limited access or opportunity.	I feel more confident about sewing.	34
		I learned new sewing skills.	47
		I am inspired to learn more and try new projects.	26
Reflecting an inclusive and welcoming space (for the Somali-speaking community)	We reflect and serve a diverse community. We serve every patron with respect and dignity. We offer resources that advance opportunity and equity. We hire and support talented staff members who reflect the community we serve.	I feel welcome and comfortable at the library.	46
		I am excited to come back to the library.	24
Increased opportunities for community building	We re-imagine library service and spaces. We put people first as we design our buildings and online services to offer the best possible experience. We continually adapt to provide the best service possible to the people and the community we serve.	I enjoyed being a part of the community of this class.	36
		I worked with others during this program.	26
		I plan on telling other people about this library program.	19

Goal	Priority	Output
Increasing library services and programs for the Somali-speaking community	We reflect and serve a diverse community. We serve every patron with respect and dignity. We offer resources that advance opportunity and equity. We hire and support talented staff members who reflect the community we serve.	Number of programs: 16 (four series of four classes)
		Number of patrons served: 32
		% of Somali-speaking community as participants: 100%



Micro Actions Support Culture of Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion in an Academic Library

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LILY HAWLEY grew up in the high deserts of New Mexico with storytelling in her blood and ink on her fingers. She followed the call to adventure and moved to Oregon to pursue her BA in English and later her Master of Library Science from Emporia State University. She currently works as a Collections Assistant at the OHSU Library and a Public Service Assistant at the Tualatin Public Library.



JENNIFER WELLS first fell in love with library science as a reference assistant at Oregon State University. She's now returning to the field after a near-decade-long hiatus of producing television news. Jennifer is a student worker at the OHSU Library in Portland and University of Oregon Portland Library and Learning Commons. She's in Emporia State University's SLIM cohort 19, with an expected graduation date of Summer 2020.

As student workers at the Oregon Health & Science University (OHSU) Library, we wanted to better understand the role of equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) in an academic library. In conversations with staff, both in person and through emailed questions and responses, we have found that personal values are a driving force behind many smaller, continuous staff actions in promoting EDI throughout different departments.

Across libraries and larger institutions, EDI values are often built into larger strategic visions. However, guidance for the practical implementation of these values may be less specific, leaving staff to make their own decisions on how to achieve these larger institutional goals. Diversity and inclusion are top values at OHSU. Under the current strategic plan, known as "Vision 2020," the first goal is to "be a great organization, diverse in people and ideas," with which will be accomplished through strategies like "cultivate a climate of inclusion and respect for every individual in the OHSU community" and "foster a culturally



proficient, inclusive and diverse workforce” (Oregon Health & Science University, 2014). This goal has been in place since 2007, and sets a tone for the entire institution.

Under the OHSU Library 2016–21 strategic plan, explicit mentions of EDI are relegated to objectives to serve a larger mission where information discovery and collaboration are prioritized. For example, the library seeks to “ensure educational resources and services impact target populations of increasing demographic diversity,” to work toward a goal of “engag[ing] in the development, delivery, and evaluation of formal education programs” (Oregon Health & Science University Library, n.d.). However, there are no clear policies or guidelines for how to do this. For example, within the library’s collection development policy, there is no mention of EDI (Oregon Health & Science University Library, 2018). This does not mean, however, that there is not a culture of EDI at OHSU Library.

Role of Diversity Committee

In 2017, the library formed a diversity committee charged to act as a guiding resource in an effort to help the library more specifically express its support for diversity, equity, and inclusion. The group has worked with the university’s Center for Diversity and Inclusion on several projects, including participating in the OHSU-wide ongoing staff unconscious bias training. It has also organized events for staff enrichment, creating environments for conversations around EDI involving guest presentations and podcast listening sessions.

These projects can have a huge impact on the library overall, but each arose from suggestions from individuals. By forming a group to discuss EDI topics monthly, the library formally supports building individual ideas into larger projects, e.g., going beyond recommending an interesting podcast to coworkers to organizing a series of listening sessions and discussions around it.

Micro Actions

The concept of a series of small, consistent actions effecting larger change was broadly popularized by Charles Duhigg’s best-selling (New York Times, 2012) book *The Power of Habit*. Duhigg (2012) promotes the idea of “keystone habits”: repetitive behaviors that “help other habits flourish by creating new structures . . . establish[ing] cultures where change becomes contagious” (p. 109). While popular psychology has promoted this concept through a self-help lens (e.g., small actions like making your bed every day improve your overall quality of life) (Smith, 2015), there is also academic research relating to workplace management and organizational culture. A 2018 study at three Brazilian universities found that institutional strategies were better represented by staff micro actions than by formal strategic planning. This was demonstrated through small actions by managers positively affecting the performance of academic units (Meyer, Jr., Pascuci & Meyer, 2018). A 2015 business management study supports the idea that micro actions in a workplace environment “coalesce into macro-atmospheres and overall situations and overall cultures” (Stokes et al., 2015). These examples support what we have observed at OHSU: small, repeated actions by staff significantly contribute to the overall library culture.

Staff Examples

Our idea for this article came out of personal experience. As student workers for Access Services and Collection Management, we had both noticed an increase in new library materials highlighting LGBTQ+ topics. Each of us, without any direction or consulting one another,



had made a point to showcase these particular titles on the library's new bookshelf by facing the covers outward. When we discussed why we did this, we each admitted to personally valuing EDI in library settings and thought this kind of small action was something we could do to visibly promote EDI through our collection. What patrons see in our collections represents a version of reality, of what is possible. It shapes the way our students, the medical professionals of the future, view and understand the treatment for diverse groups. It is crucial that students have access to a wide variety of resources: ones that allow them to see how diseases look on a range of skin tones, to understand how to make accommodations for people with physical and intellectual disabilities, to learn about treating the health concerns of the LGBTQ+ community, and to develop culturally sensitive practices for providing healthcare to patients from many cultures, socioeconomic classes, and marginalized groups.

This conversation led us to question why we had noticed the library acquiring more LGBTQ+ materials and, in particular, books on transgender health topics. As previously mentioned, the collection development policy does not directly guide purchasing toward EDI, but since OHSU provides transgender healthcare as a core health service, these materials are collected with the same depth and breadth and support all core services. As to why we had noticed more titles recently, we found the reason to be twofold. Collections staff see distributors offering more LGBTQ+ materials, which is likely a result of publishing trends. What we can confirm is that these titles already align with OHSU Library scoping rules established with vendors for selection, and then a selector agrees that these kinds of titles are a good fit for our library. Similar types of actions are being taken across every department of the library as a growing number of faculty, staff, and students study and research in this area.

To gain a broader perspective, we gathered information on some of the everyday actions by which staff promote EDI through conversations. We both spoke directly with library staff and emailed out a web form to collect replies.

Access Services staff primarily spoke to ways they engage with library users. One staff member told us they “try to meet people wherever they are at—physically, digitally, or socially” and “do what [they] can to promote a safe and comfortable space.” Another talked about the importance of treating all library users equally, despite what may feel like uncomfortable conversations. They provided an example where, upon acquiring a table for access and use by persons with physical disabilities using wheelchairs, their supervisor was unsure where to put it. This staff member then suggested simply asking the person for whom they got the table, going on to say, “I think sometimes people are afraid to mention topics and steer away from what they know. It requires being brave.”

When allocating funding for additional seating, the library director asked a staff group to recommend a broader range of furniture to meet the physical space needs of a spectrum of library users. While this was a top-down recommendation, staff members are now independently observing and manipulating furniture on a regular basis to promote user engagement and appeal to different body types, sometimes as simple as moving a table to create a wider path.

A staff member within the library's Education, Research, and Community Outreach (ERCO) department explained the importance of understanding gatekeeping and context as part of teaching information literacy. They make a point to teach search strategies to “make people think about how information is labeled and structured ... grant[ing] authority to



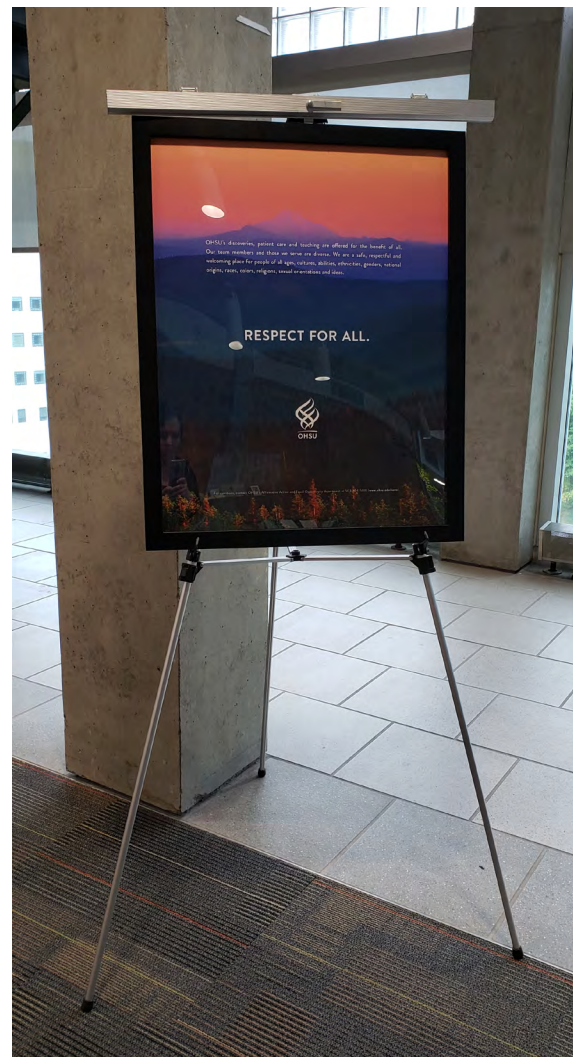
certain kinds of information over others.” This person also pointed out that at a health and science university, students may have a mind frame of seeking an objective truth, such as a correct diagnosis, but it is nonetheless important to teach that authority is constructed and contextual, pulling from the ACRL Framework for Information Literacy (Association of College and Research Libraries, 2015).

Macro Effects

Beyond the examples of micro actions or general mindsets existing on their own, several spoke of larger projects growing out of individual efforts to promote EDI. For example, amid a larger national cultural conversation following the 2016 presidential election, several staff members felt moved to display signs on their office doors proclaiming that various marginalized groups were welcome. This led to the OHSU Library Council taking up the issue and assigning a task force to determine how the library could put out a unified message on the matter. Out of this came the sanctioning of posting Rebecca McCorkindale and Julie Syler’s “Libraries Are for Everyone” signs (McCorkindale, 2017) in designated locations and the prominent display of an institution-wide, OHSU-branded “respect for all” message. More than two years later, these signs are still part of the library landscape.

In 2019, OHSU Library rebranded ILL service as the “Get It For Me” service. This change came directly from student workers noticing the service not performing to its potential and seeking ways to make it accessible to more users. Student workers conducted research into how other libraries were labeling the service and found “Get It For Me” to be a common name intended to remove language barriers by replacing acronyms and jargon with plain language.

Two new collections, a game collection and a graphic novel collection, will expand user access to information in new ways and allow OHSU community members to “explore ideas in a social way” (Forero & Hamilton, 2019). The game collection started with the donations of games from one of the librarian’s own collections. According to one response we received, one criterion for the selection of new games is “to promote awareness or empathy for different



groups of people.” The graphic novel collection will be comprised primarily of narrative-driven graphic novels that tell stories about and around the healthcare profession focusing on stories from many perspectives. Both of these collections came from the initiative of staff members wanting to diversify the materials and information formats available.

There is also a growing effort to make other items, such as cameras, audio recorders, and 3D printers available for checkout. The staff member leading the charge on this has described it as a way to democratize access to technology that currently only certain members of the OHSU community may have. For example, a department may have a 3D printer available to its students, but students from other programs (or other OHSU staff or faculty) likely do not have access. Having this kind of equipment available at the library increases the equity of access.

High Visibility Projects

There are also a couple of larger, long-term projects that are the result of the personal desire of staff members to use their current job roles to increase the overall visibility of marginalized groups at OHSU. The current exhibition on display at OHSU Library is one such project. *Queering OHSU: Honoring Our LGBTQ+ History* is the result of the University Archivist proposing, researching, selecting, and curating the exhibit. He also used this as an opportunity to build LGBTQ+ holdings within the archival collection. Through outreach and conversations with OHSU stakeholders, he added pieces from the university’s LGBTQ+ employee resource group, three oral histories, and various ephemera. The materials are evidence of the important roles that LGBTQ+ individuals have played in the University’s history as students, practitioners, and patients. History, as the exhibit suggests, is static. We are unable to change the past. However, we can learn from it. By making that past visible, we acknowledge the work and lives that paved the way for the environment of inclusion that we have today. This display, which is located just inside the entrance to the library and will be on display until Fall 2019, welcomes every person who steps through our doors.



Another project stemmed from tagging practices within the OHSU Digital Asset Management (DAM) system. In noticing a default application of the “diversity” tag to images featuring people of color, the repository librarian determined that there was a need for a more organized and accessible way to describe and locate digital assets involving diversity within the DAM. She and a faculty member from OHSU’s School of Nursing are now using funding from the National Network of Libraries of Medicine’s Pacific Northwest Region Health Sciences Library Partnership Award to build a photo repository of pathophysiological conditions that reflects the diversity of patients that medical students are likely to encounter in their careers. “This digital image collection will begin to provide teachers of health professions and students access to the photographs they need so that their students can learn to recognize different pathophysiological conditions in skin of various colors, increase their awareness of issues related to health and diversity, and prepare them for more effective clinical work with their future patients” (Pierce, 2019).

These examples show how the formal structures within the library can support individual initiatives, and in doing so foster an environment where larger projects can manifest and subsequently have a much larger impact.

Conclusion

Most micro actions and macro effects mentioned in this article are based primarily on information collected through observation and conversations with staff. While there is quantitative data that measures the impact of some of these examples, such as the increased use of the “Get It For Me” service, this data is not necessarily contextualized to relate it to EDI. Additionally, many of these actions are difficult to quantify, such as the impact of curating the new books display to showcase materials about medically treating individuals from underserved populations or written by authors from marginalized groups. To appreciate the impact beyond what we have observed and concluded, we need further feedback from both



library users and staff. The potential for ways to assess impact would be a topic well-suited for the diversity committee. As the library continues to value individual efforts to support and promote EDI, we expect more formal practices to form organically. EDI is a continually evolving subject, where there is no finite goal to meet or threshold to cross. It is important that any goals and objectives set are regularly reevaluated. It is equally important to acknowledge the personal values that drive the everyday actions which set the stage for institutional goals to succeed. 🌱



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Yes, but ... One Librarian's Thoughts About Doing It Right

by **Heather McNeil**

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HEATHER MCNEIL retired in September after 40 years of librarianship in Colorado and Oregon. She is now consulting and training on early literacy and storytime skills, as well as enjoying more opportunities to perform as a professional storyteller. She has also been contracted to write a book on social emotional learning at storytime. Heather lives in the forest outside of Bend. She reads three books at a time (one at the dining table, one in the bedroom, and one on audio), and enjoys writing teen historical fantasy, none of which have been published. Yet.

Here's the thing. All the conference programs, blogs, and conversations about diversity and inclusion have given me increased awareness and caused me to pause and reflect and question. I've cringed at practices of mine in the past, and delighted in the increasing abundance of beautiful books that feature people of color. I've learned a lot and have had more than one tough conversation with staff.

Yes, but ... I've also seen and heard opinions in the library world that potentially create more barriers. I've perceived attitudes that seem to shut down dialogue with, "I'm right, you're wrong. I understand, but you just don't get it."

This was not an easy article to write. I have struggled, rewritten, asked others to review, and rewritten again. But, as I prepare to retire after 40 years in the library profession, and after seeing many trends and issues ebb and flow, I offer my personal thoughts on diversity in the literary world that I, and perhaps others as well, have struggled with as a library professional.

Collection Development

Here at Deschutes Public Library we are lucky to be well-funded, and we have an excellent collection development department who stocks the shelves with important books such as *Dreamers*, written and illustrated by Yuyi Morales; *The Undeclared*, written by Kwame Alexander, illustrated by Kadir Nelson; *Want to Play Trucks?*, written and illustrated by Bob Graham; and *The Big Umbrella*, written and illustrated by Amy June Bates. We include them in booklists and displays. We promote them in book talks. We read them at storytime. We put them face out on the new books shelves. I asked Cheryl Weems, collection development librarian for the children's and teen collections, how well they circulate. "Better than they used to. There is such quality now, such beautiful books, and a good story is a good story."

That was wonderful to hear, but it must be difficult for libraries with limited budgets and very conservative communities to determine the priorities for the book budget. How do we balance spending the dollars according to our community's preferences, vs. purchasing books that represent cultural awareness and diversity but will possibly sit, unread, on the shelves? This does not include just picture books, which are somewhat easier to promote, but also chapter books, teen books, urban novels, etc.



Dr. Seuss

I am saddened to learn about his racist cartoons. I am disappointed at myself for not noticing the stereotypical illustrations in *If I Ran the Zoo*. I am relieved to know that his opinions changed over time, as have mine and most everyone I know. Goodness, I think back to my college days in the early '70s. I was certainly opinionated, but not very informed, about the Vietnam War. My world was the military world, raised on army bases and guided by protocol, expectations, and pride in my father. I was also absolutely unaware of the civil rights activities of the '50s and '60s. But now I know, and continue to try to be better informed.

Do we hold children's authors and illustrators to a higher standard when we suggest no longer promoting their literature because of their racist beliefs of fifty years ago that later changed?

The *Cat in the Hat* is now considered racist because of the comparison of the Cat to an African American in a minstrel show. Seuss himself wrote a minstrel show in college and performed in blackface. I'm also uncomfortable knowing that Lewis Carroll had a fondness for photographing young girls, Roald Dahl was blatantly anti-Semitic, and Orson Scott Card is homophobic. I clearly remember trying to read aloud *Peter Pan* to my daughter, and being very uncomfortable with J.M. Barrie's stereotypes. We talked about it. We put the book aside.

I'll repeat that. We chose to put the book aside. Let the parent or teacher decide. Offer more choices. I agree with the suggestion that if someone requests the *Little House* books by Laura Ingalls Wilder, the librarian could also recommend Louise Erdrich's *Birchbark House* series. Recent blogs seem to suggest it is our responsibility to caution customers about their choices, advise them about the stereotypes or prejudices—and I do not agree with that. I absolutely detest *The Giving Tree* by Shel Silverstein, but I can happily put it in the hands of a customer and then maybe recommend *Poetree* by Shauna LaVoy Reynolds or the lovely *Pandora* by Victoria Turnbull. Choices.

So, back to Seuss. Will children subconsciously absorb stereotypes and racism by reading *Cat in the Hat*? In a world that no longer offers minstrel shows will they see his gloves, facial characteristics and antics as representative of behavior that was intended to ridicule and belittle? Or will they just think he's mischievous like Bad Kitty, and hyperactive like David Shannon's *No, David*, and manipulative like every trickster tale ever told?

I think we are guilty of our own accusations when we reach the point of, "The author had racist beliefs early in his career, so we will not promote, display or recommend his titles." Whoa. To me, that smacks of a form of censorship, implying that we will promote, display or recommend only those titles that have been vetted and approved by ... whom?

Debbie Reese

Hoo boy. Opening a can of worms here. Believe me, I admire her work. I have heard her speak at ALA, I recommend her website to teachers preparing a Native American curriculum, I read her reviews. So when she was selected as the May Hill Arbuthnot speaker, I made sure I set aside the time to listen. Her speech was important and interesting. Until the Caldecott Medal. Ms. Reese implied that the 2019 committee did not choose wisely when they passed over Morales's *Dreamers*. And those are the kinds of accusations that do this movement toward inclusion and awareness a disservice. I served on the 2018 Caldecott Committee and the 2005 Newbery Committee. I know how intense, difficult, and challenging discussions can be. I know how fifteen voices and perspectives are shared, minds must



remain open, and voting results can be individually heartbreaking. To imply that the committee should consider the ethnicity or diversity of the author or illustrator, and not award those who have been awarded before, reflects a lack of knowledge about the criteria for the Newbery and Caldecott. Other awards were created for the purpose of a specific ethnicity, whereas the Newbery and Caldecott consider the entire volume of that year's publications without considering an author's or illustrator's previous awards or ethnicity.

Reading While White

There are many who support the blog, *Reading While White*. I read their entries, and I appreciate what the writers are trying to achieve. I read them because I want to know what they're challenging. I read them because it is not comfortable. But after a while, I began to realize that all I was left with was a feeling of animosity (them) and failure (me). I also felt that they believe anyone who dares to disagree with their views about books, art displays, awards, etc. is W-R-O-N-G. Or, at least, seeing through an uninformed white lens. That does not help promote dialogue. That does not enlighten me or encourage me. I just feel bad. Maybe that's what they want—to make those of us who still like *Cat in the Hat* to feel bad.

My awareness and desire to understand more have been much better served by resources such as:

- The Scene on Radio podcast series, "Seeing White"
- Rebecca Nagle's podcast, "This Land"
- Robin Di Angelo's book, *White Fragility: Why It's Hard to Talk to White People About Racism*, as well as YouTube interviews
- Samini Ali's TED Talk, "What Does the Quran Really Say About a Muslim Woman's Hijab"
- Maya Gonzalez's blog, "Children's Books as a Radical Act"
- The amazing books that are being published, such as *When Aidan Became a Brother*, written by Kyle Lukoff and illustrated by Kaylani Juanita; *Where Are You From?*, written by Yamile Saied Mendez and illustrated by Jaime Kim, and *Hope Nation: YA Authors Share Personal Moments of Inspiration*, edited by Rose Brock.

These resources give me a better understanding, or reassurance, and, sometimes, hope.

There are two things I am sure of. I absolutely know that discomfort is part of the movement, and that we need all these voices. We have to fight back to move forward. I also know that those who work in libraries are truly committed to the importance of literacy, to their communities, and to personal choice without judgment.

Yes, but ... Will the loudest, strongest voices allow—and hear—other voices? Will we work together or fraction off? Will we, as one colleague said to me, "overcorrect ourselves?"

I'm going to close with a personal experience I had many years ago. I've written about this elsewhere, so forgive me if I repeat, but it was a powerful experience that has shaped my attitude about stories, inclusion, and cultural divides. I am not African American, but I have



been fascinated by African folklore and animals ever since reading *Born Free* by Joy Adamson when I was about 10. Finally, I put myself horribly in debt and traveled around Kenya with a member of the Kikuyu people, listening to and recording stories. I always asked their permission to tell them, and they always looked at me like I was crazy to even ask. Of course, they said. Tell our stories.

A year later I was invited to present a program about my experience of collecting stories at the International Reading Association Conference in Charleston, SC. I was nervous because I am clearly not of African descent, and yet I was going to tell some of their stories and describe my experiences with the people and the animals. I showed slides (no PowerPoint back then), told stories, and told stories about the stories. When it was over, an African American woman walked up to me. She was wearing traditional West African clothing, which was colorful, dramatic and causing me even more uncertainty. She said, “When I walked in here and saw you, I thought, huh! But then I heard the stories that came from your heart, and I saw the love in your eyes, and I want to say just one thing to you. Sister!” She opened up her arms and gave me a big hug I have never forgotten.

That gift from her guided me toward believing we can eliminate boundaries and include more, not less. My experiences on the Caldecott and Newbery committees taught me the importance of being open to perceptions other than my own. Working with talented and dedicated library staff confirmed that best intentions prevail in libraries throughout Oregon. And *The Cat in the Hat* taught me that sometimes it’s okay to be just downright ridiculous. 🌍

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Vol./No.	Theme	Deadline	Pub. Date	Guest Editor
Vol 25 • No 3 Fall 2019	<i>Youth Services Take Over OLA Quarterly!</i>	September 24, 2019	November 15, 2019	April Spisak <i>Head of Youth Services, Albany Public Library</i>



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