PRESENTATION OUTLINE

Diversity -- Inclusion -- Equity: Is your library embracing these standards of social justice?

Outcomes:

(1) Learn proposed definitions of diversity, inclusion, and equity.
(2) Learn different kinds of diversity and barriers to provide truly excellent service for all.
(3) Recognize biases that they will be able to remove in their library environments.
(4) Learn a few simple things to make their library more welcoming to diverse populations.

SLIDE 1
Title, Date, Presenters

2 min

1. PERSONAL INTRODUCTIONS

• Neither Liesl or Juan are experts on Diversity, Inclusion, and Equity
• But we have dealt with these issues for many years
• We would like to share some thoughts and observations. Hopefully you will share your own ideas with us
• As we explore how these concepts play out in our institutions
• SLIDE 2 - We will talk about:
  o Different kinds of diversity – proposing alternative ways of thinking about diversity
  o Proposed new definitions of Diversity, Inclusion, and Equity
  o Recognizing the diversity in our identity makeup and how these traits contribute to forming our own biases
  o Ways in which our own biases have an impact on the library environment
2. PARTICIPANT ACTIVITY #1

- **SLIDE 3** - Participants pair up and use Handout #1
- INSTRUCTION: Take 2 minutes and list all the ways in which you are different from your partner.
- The point is to write as MANY differences as you can!
- Then take 2 minutes and list all the ways in which you are alike.
- Again the point is to list as many similarities as you can.
- Ready? Go!
3. REPORT ON ACTIVITY #1

- Participants come together as a group
  - Did you identify any “interesting” differences? Any “exotic” dissimilarities?
  - Again, did you discover some similarities that made you go “Really?!?!?”
- The point of the exercise is to illustrate how relatively easy it is to point out the differences between us and how we have a harder time finding commonalities.
- Perhaps that is why when we find a common trait or interest, we tend to emphasize those and gravitate towards that similarity.
  - Likewise, perhaps that is why we tend to shy away from those who are different from us.
4. PROPOSING ALTERNATIVE WAYS OF THINKING ABOUT DIVERSITY

- **SLIDE 4** - Consider the common phrases
  - “Let’s find the common ground. Let’s identify how we are alike and build a relationship upon those similarities and common interests.”
    - What do you think? If the experience we just had is valid, what can we say about that phrase?
    - We would like to propose that perhaps that has not worked too well.
    - This phrase presumes that the differences between us is a weakness and should be avoided.
    - We would like to propose that recognizing and truly valuing the differences between individuals are what makes a relationship stronger.
  - We must show tolerance.
    - First, what is tolerance? What does it mean to “tolerate” something?
    - According to our trusted Google Definitions: Tolerance is “the ability or willingness to tolerate something, in particular the existence of opinions or behavior that one does not necessarily agree with.”
    - OK, so what is Tolerate? Google says “allow the existence, occurrence, or practice of (something that one does not necessarily like or agree with) without interference.”
    - According to Merriam-Webster Dictionary:
      - Tolerance: (a) willingness to accept feelings, habits, or beliefs that are different from your own; (b) the ability to accept, experience, or survive something harmful or unpleasant; (c) medical: your body’s ability to become adjusted to something (such as a drug) so that its effects are experienced less strongly
      - Tolerate: (a) to allow (something that is bad, unpleasant, etc.) to exist, happen, or be done; (b) to experience (something harmful or unpleasant) without being harmed; (c) to accept the feelings, behavior, or beliefs of (someone)
    - Did you notice how most of these definitions have negative connotations?
  - **SLIDE 5** - Is there an alternative to Tolerance?
    - We propose RESPECT which involves: (1) Seeking to understand the difference and (2) valuing the unique experiences of the individual is a better approach to Diversity and this approach begins to pave the road to Inclusion and Equity.
5. INTRODUCING NEW DEFINITIONS OF DIVERSITY, INCLUSION, AND EQUITY

- SLIDE 6 - In libraries we talk a lot about serving a diverse community and serving everyone equally, in essence, we want to include everyone in what we do.

- I’m curious: What comes to YOUR mind when you hear the phrase “diversity in the library”
  - Thoughts?

- Let’s dig a little deeper. In the context of our conversation so far: What is diversity? What is Inclusion? What is Equality? What is Equity?

- We would like to propose some definitions that we believe advance our thoughts and put us on the path to provide truly excellent service to diverse communities.
  - We’ve included these new definitions in page 6 of your packet
  - From ALA’s Task Force for Equity, Diversity and Inclusion
  - SLIDE 7 Diversity
    - Diversity can be defined as the sum of the ways that people are both alike and different. Visible diversity is generally those things we cannot change and are external. However, diversity goes beyond this to what we call ‘invisible’ diversity. Invisible diversity includes those attributes that are not readily seen. So, when we recognize, value, and embrace diversity, we are recognizing, valuing, and embracing the uniqueness of each individual.
    - The Task Force has chosen to define “diversity” in all its complexity in order to recognize and honor the uniqueness of each ALA member, all members of our profession, and our very diverse communities. The Task Force also agrees with the National Education Association that, “While diversity itself is not a value-laden term, the way that people react to diversity is driven by values, attitudes, beliefs, and so on. Full acceptance of diversity is a major principle of social justice.”
  - Inclusion
    - Inclusion means an environment in which all individuals are treated fairly and respectfully; are valued for their distinctive skills, experiences, and perspectives; have equal access to resources and opportunities; and can contribute fully to the organization’s success.
    - The Task Force believes that, to be inclusive, our association, profession, and society must recognize the inherent worth and dignity of every member of the community; involve and empower all members to participate and contribute; promote and sustain a sense of belonging; and value and practice respect for the talents, beliefs, backgrounds, and ways of living of all members.
  - Equity
    - Equity is not the same as formal equality. Formal equality implies sameness. Equity, on the other hand, assumes difference and takes difference into account to ensure a fair process and, ultimately, a fair (or equitable) outcome. Equity recognizes that some groups were (and are) disadvantaged in accessing educational and employment opportunities and are, therefore, underrepresented or marginalized in many organizations and institutions. The effects of that exclusion often linger systemically within organizational policies, practices and procedures. Equity, therefore, means increasing diversity by ameliorating conditions of disadvantaged groups.
    - The Task Force believes that everyone deserves equitable rights and opportunities. Our goal is to create a just and equitable Association, profession, and society where everyone has access to social power, resources, and physical and psychological safety.

- Any thoughts, concerns, discussion?
6. DIVERSITY & IDENTITY

- So, if diversity is the sum of the ways in which people are different and alike – the ways people are – we are really talking about dimensions of identity.

- **SLIDE 8** – A few years ago, Yolanda Cuesta, an awesome library consultant and trainer did a workshop for the State Library on the cultural implications for library service and she used this model that shows Four Dimensions of Diversity. (See Handout #2)

- When I look at this model, I think of the various dimensions that create my own identity:
  - When I think about WHO Juan Lee is, what are the most important characteristics or traits that contribute to my own identity:
    - Is the money I make in a year? (Income)
    - Is it my gender? Or Sexual Orientation?
    - Is it my hyphenated ethnicity, i.e. Mexican-American background?
    - Is it my professional degrees? (education)
    - Is it my faith or lack of faith? (Religion)
    - What are the things that are important to me? What are the traits that help define my identity?

- Other models show a fifth level and call it the Cultural Dimension (See Handout #3)
  - **SLIDE 9** – Consider this model where we show Culture as an iceberg with “visible” traits and invisible traits.
7. PARTICIPANT ACTIVITY #2

- **SLIDE 10** - Please look at Handout #2 and #3 and take a minute to think about the things that are important to you and the traits that contribute to creating your own identity.
- Then in Handout #4 in each circle, write one of those characteristics or values that make the unique YOU.
- Does anyone care to share their combinations of traits?
- REFLECTION: Many of us may identify similar kinds of traits and perhaps that’s why we gravitate to each other, because we can “relate” to one another along those lines. But I submit to you that it is the wild combinations of traits that make each one of us unique and by acknowledging and valuing that diversity we become better prepared to serve our communities.
- WARNING: I also propose that these wild characteristics that make up our identity also color the glasses through which we see life – these traits, in essence, form the basis of our biases.
8. RECOGNIZING PERSONAL BIASES

- **SLIDE 11** - I strongly recommend that you watch the Ted Talk “How to overcome our biases? Walk boldly toward them” by Vernā Myers, a national consultant for Diversity and Inclusion. A very powerful talk, 18 minutes long. She said: “Biases are the stories we make up about people before we know who they actually are.”

- **SLIDE 12** - DEFINITION: From Merriam-Webster:
  - a tendency to believe that some people, ideas, etc., are better than others that usually results in treating some people unfairly
  - a strong interest in something
  - a personal and sometimes unreasoned judgment
  - an instance of prejudice

- I believe that serious reflection about our own identity is a crucial step into identifying and understanding our own biases. We all have them and it will be very hard to get rid of them. But knowing we have certain biases is the first step towards doing something about it.
9. BIASES AND LIBRARY WORK

- **SLIDE 13** - How do these biases show in my library work? Consider these:
  - If I am a male teen librarian with an enthusiasm for sports, do I assume that no girls would be interested in sports?
  - If my sexual orientation is heterosexual, do I avoid doing outreach to GLBTQ members of my community because I am uncomfortable among them? – BTW: Using terms like “them” “they” “that group” “those people” may be good signs of a personal bias
  - If my political tendencies are very liberal, do I alienate conservative members of the public by emphasizing only programs from Democratic party speakers?
  - If my religious beliefs tell me that black and white movies are better, am I causing a disservice to my patrons who would like to watch movies in color because I only buy DVDs in black and white?

- I propose to you that personal biases exist and creep into our every day library work through the choices we make in our collections, our programs, our policies, the places we select for outreach efforts, and even the way we talk to people and interact with the public, especially those people who are not like us.
10. THINGS WE CAN DO TO CREATE A WELCOMING ENVIRONMENT

- **SLIDE 14** - Being aware of the various dimensions of diversity is key
- Being aware of our own biases is also essential
- Looking critically at our library policies and practices and asking ourselves:
  - Why do we do this?
  - Are there individuals who are being impacted in a negative way because of this?
- Identifying specific dimensions of diversity to focus on
  - Creating strategic goals to address specific needs
  - Aligning programs to serve target audiences
  - Building collections that reflect the needs and interests of your target audiences
  - Designing services that reach folks who traditionally do not receive services
- Stepping boldly out of your comfort zone
  - Meeting THOSE people (folks unlike me) on their turf
  - Talking about uncomfortable subjects
11. PARTICIPANT ACTIVITY #3

- **SLIDE 15** - Please look at Handout #5 and take a couple of minutes to think about the things we talked about and write down:
  - One main idea or concept that made an impression on you today
  - One thing you will about yourself to increase your own competency level on issues of diversity, inclusion, and equity
  - One thing you will do in the library to create a more welcoming environment for your diverse communities

12. COMMENTS? QUESTIONS?