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Diversity & Inclusion Unconference Session

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Abstract

Session Information:

Participants will discuss issues of diversity and inclusion as they relate to all types of libraries. This session is an open space for brainstorming, collaborating, and inspiration. The conversation will be flexible and the dialogue will be driven by the participants. Post-its and markers will be made available so that participants can write down their desired discussion topics, which will then become the focus of the session.

Disciplines

Library and Information Science

Comments

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Diversity & Inclusion Unconference Session ILA 2017

Session Information:

Thursday, October 19 • 2:15pm - 3:05pm

Cara B. Stone - facilitator

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Session Notes:

- Pronouns discussion:
    - Should we request pronouns be put on ILA conference nametags? (Yes)
    - What does encouraging use of or asking about preferred pronouns communicate?
        - Not assuming pronouns or identities
        - Awareness of vocabulary can signal an awareness of identity differences/respect for identities to marginalized individuals
        - Can open the door to conversations with students/patrons
        - Helps avoid misgendering
        - Avoid othering
    - Some prefer to default to using singular, if person working with prefers another that's fine but try to default to neutral whenever possible
    - Using person's name in place of pronouns when unsure
    - It can be difficult to break old habits, to change pronoun use because it can be such an ingrained habit
    - Check judgement to remember intent → educate v incriminate; when can we make it a teaching or awareness moment rather than accusatory or shaming for someone who may have misspoken or put their foot in their mouth
    - Language issues, i.e. Chinese has no gendered pronouns so when there is a translation "slip up" with the "wrong" gendered pronoun those who are misgendered may become upset, but it's really a language issue rather than a gender issue
    - As librarians, when is it appropriate or necessary to ask about preferred pronouns? And how can we do that in a way that respects the person and their identities? Sometimes our desire to be polite and build understanding might come off as intrusive to patrons
    - Public service vocabulary -- polite "sir" or "ma'am" alternatives?
        - Excuse me (without sir or ma'am)
        - Is there some way I can help you?
        - How can I help you?
        - Focusing on their information need rather than needing to know gendered pronouns
    - What about misgendering children - example given was children in the Jewish community with long hair that isn't cut until they reach a certain age
        - Experience tells us to learn to think before we speak
        - Be purposeful about developmental growth, the experiences we seek out as professionals, the conversations we have, resources we access to help build this context (as much as is possible) before running into situations in your work environment
- How can we help protect marginalized populations in our libraries/communities from harassment, assault, bullying?

- - Speak up -- see something, say something
    - correct/intervene
    - Bystander intervention training (links to come from participants)
      - Mentors in Violence Prevention: http://www.mvpnational.org/
      - Scenarios
      - Strategies for de-escalating situations
      - Ways to address microaggressions (i.e. jokes, "no, where are you *really* from?," offhanded offensive comments)
      - Engaging with allyship
      - Comic Cara mentioned about intervening when you see islamophobia: https://www.buzzfeed.com/ryanhatesthis/someone-made-a-guide-for-what-to-do-when-you-see-islamophobi?bffbmain&ref=bffbmain&utm_term=.lnopNGj1r#.uuqrKZ8gL
- What if it's your boss? Context: background--boss doesn't have experience with diverse populations, small-town upbringing, ideals described as "conservative," says racist and sexist things
  - Employee mentioned things to higher-up (direct boss) but no big change is seen
  - Can we tap into library mission or values principles and make sure there is a connection between upholding these values and how these offensive actions violate or contradict them?
  - Are there ways to bring up other "scenarios" that mirror what we see in the actions of the boss where perhaps by addressing them in a scenario that the boss isn't a part of might help them see the negative/harmful nature of their own actions? (Sneak in the veggies by raising awareness about this other scenario/situation?)
- What about in classrooms when we're not the teacher of record? We're not the authority figure in the room, we didn't necessarily help craft the classroom culture, so what's our role? We didn't help set those ground rules, we're a "guest speaker" or visitor?
  - Courage to speak up
  - Encourage reflection by asking person a question to clarify or rephrase. Signals that you heard what they said, that you're capable of reading between those lines, and that it's not something you'll let pass -- I caught that.
    - What do you mean by that?
    - Can you rephrase that?
  - Room ground rules when someone says something hurtful or offensive, allowing/encouraging students to vocalize "ouch" → This made Cara think of the documentary film "I'm not racist...Am I?" http://news.drake.edu/2017/04/18/documentary-film-and-director-discussion-coming-to-sheslow/
  - Knowing what works well for the age level you're working with in the classroom. Sometimes focusing on it for a length of time can derail the class and not be productive, whereas calling it out clearly "we don't talk like that in this classroom" and then keep moving on with the lesson might be more effective.
  - Know audience - contextual
- How can we cultivate a welcoming environment with our communities and staff?
  - Signage - easy to understand with images/visual literacy elements, colors, etc. to clue in users about collections and spaces in addition to the written word
  - Handicap buttons v just auto-open doors
    - Does disability signage for doors indicate or assign labels and equate that to identity? What labeling can we do?
    - Adaptive tech labeling - what language do you use? "If I use these services, does that define me?"
    - How do we convey adaptive spaces without defining or othering?

- - - "Press here to open"
      - Switching to person-first language
      - Imprecise language
      - Action -- images depicting the action rather than the person doing the action
  - Webinar on accessible presentations - considerations like color-contrast, consistency with microphone use, captioning, navigation technology, tagged documents
    - Awareness of physical placement for lip reading needs
    - Use of microphones in all campus meetings
  - Judging stature/physical appearance, dismissing height or making microagressive comments
  - Including visual clues with call/response answers in class -- creating a "parking lot" or bank on the whiteboard of student responses already offered
  - Color coding call number ranges providing visual consistency which helps all → Universal Design for Learning applied in all areas of library services
  - Addressing one-off issues because they may grow into bigger issues OR you may not know they're already bigger issues, but taking first step to address important
  - Web design and ability. So much consideration for mobile design, but are we losing accessibility as part of that? Things like buttons being primarily visual icons rather than words, incomplete alt text

Topics, questions, or notes submitted during the session:
- Use of pronouns of reference needs to be on name tags and the "norm"
- How can we make the profession more diverse?
- Ways to include diverse languages, cultures, etc. for our youngest patrons
- One thing I'm thinking about is educational opportunities for neuro-non-typical Autism Spectrum students
- No expectations
- Challenge: access to diversity-related materials that are not conventionally published -- eg. Stay Woke from BET
- What it is like to try to implement inclusion activities in rural white Iowa?
- How to create a welcoming environment for diverse constituencies?
- How to recruit a diverse library staff?
- As it seems to currently be in the national consciousness...How to recognize/protect marginalized people as being especially vulnerable to harassment, assault, and bullying?
- We're working to provide programs that support diversity, but my attempts seem to mostly speak to folks who look like me and are interested in diversity rather than diverse communities. Help?
- Displays for celebrations getting stale or "expected"
- Collection development issues of inclusion in small collections
- Cultural awareness age, race, ethnicity language
- Public transportation
- Poverty -- homelessness, food insecurity
- Reading each others' history
- Implicit bias
- Perceived threat of others
- Bringing diversity on continuous basis to traditionally homogenous communities
- Reacting in a constructive way when confronting narrow-minded people.