



RLI 286

Special Issue on Diversity

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Recent social and political events throughout the United States have given rise to intense discourse on the topic of racial and ethnic inequalities. In the higher education realm, court cases such as *Fisher v. University of Texas at Austin* and Michigan’s *Schuette v. Coalition to Defend Affirmative Action* have led to a nationwide debate regarding the value of considering race and ethnicity in college admissions. As libraries in the US and Canada strive to reflect demographic trends in those countries in their staffing, programs, and collections, many libraries identify diversity and inclusion as guiding principles that will increase their relevance to the communities they serve and will lead to organizational excellence. In “Pipelines and Partnerships in Diversity at the National Library of Medicine [NLM],” Kathel Dunn and Joyce Backus of NLM outline a multi-pronged strategy for ensuring that NLM remains engaged in diversity initiatives and contributes to diversification of the medical and health sciences libraries workforce.

On the topic of workplace climate and organizational health, Michael Crumpton of the University of North Carolina at Greensboro (UNCG) Libraries writes about UNCG Libraries’ implementation of the ClimateQUAL protocol. In “Strategically Focusing on Focus Groups to Improve Organizational Climate,” Crumpton describes the UNCG Libraries’ analysis of the survey data and the process they employed to create improvement strategies based on staff feedback collected from this tool. The goal of these strategies is to improve workplace climate, ensuring improved organizational health.

In the accessibility arena, the Technology, Equality, and Accessibility in College and Higher Education Act, or TEACH Act, has ignited significant debate in the US about the degree to which institutions of higher learning should accommodate persons with disabilities as they attempt to fully engage in research and pedagogy that is increasingly reliant on technology. Best practices for accommodating patrons and employees with disabilities have long been informed, in the US, by interpretations of both the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) revised in 2010, as well as Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (simply called Section 508). Similarly, Canadian provincial authorities have legislation ensuring that persons with disabilities are fully integrated into the higher education environment. In “Developing Inclusive Research Libraries for Patrons and Staff of All Abilities,” Darlene Nichols and Anna Ercoli Schnitzer of the University of

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Michigan Library provide an important review of some of the considerations for libraries as they work to make content and services accessible to a growing population of users of all abilities. Nichols and Schnitzer also discuss strategies for making libraries welcoming organizations for staff with disabilities.

More and more, the social sciences are weighing the value that diversity and inclusion bring to systems, and many organizations and institutions are prioritizing these efforts in their strategic planning. These three articles in this issue of *RLI* offer unique insights and perspectives into the principles of diversity and inclusion and their application to various dimensions of library operations and culture—recruitment and retention of people from traditionally underrepresented groups, organizational climate and health, and library services to persons with disabilities.

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Pipelines and Partnerships in Diversity at the National Library of Medicine

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The US National Library of Medicine (NLM) uses partnerships with other library organizations, as well as building on its own expertise, to attract and retain a talented and diverse staff of librarians.

The Division of Library Operations, within NLM, is home to 270 federal employees. In order to meet its mission of enabling biomedical research, supporting health care and public health, and promoting healthy behavior by acquiring, organizing, preserving, and providing access to the world's scholarly biomedical literature, staff expertise is needed in traditional areas such as acquisitions, e-resource management, collection development, reference, document delivery, conservation, preservation, outreach, and in newer areas of digitization, digital preservation, web development, social media analysis and deployment, and systems. However, the scope of a national, federal library that produces over 295 databases and APIs, curates and manages medical terminologies, and regularly conducts research and analysis with its own and others' data sets, requires staff expertise in usability testing, user experience (web), data analysis, terminology creation, customer service, and education and training scaling from small in-house projects to products and services for the public.

This range of traditional to newer skills, of library services to library products, means NLM regularly seeks librarians of all kinds. NLM needs newer graduates who can bring a perspective unencumbered by a "the way it's always been done" mentality, as well as experienced librarians who bring perspectives from other institutions, offering a "here's how others do it and why not try it here?" approach. NLM's range of products and services also demands finding staff who reflect the diversity of the United States public, whom the library serves; librarians whose approach to work and library service offer new methods and ideas; librarians whose path to the field may not match the path of the hiring managers; or librarians who exist outside the extensive network of the library's best recruiters: its own current and former staff.

NLM has long supported the early careers of health sciences librarians through its own nationally recognized Associate Fellowship Program, which offers fellowships for recent library science graduates interested in careers in health sciences librarianship. The NLM Associate Fellowship Program is over 40 years old, and uses NLM institutional experience in curriculum development, mentorship, project sponsorship, and guidance in developing future leaders in librarianship.

NLM could have developed its own diversity and inclusivity recruitment and development programs to encourage librarians and other talented personnel to apply for its jobs, serve on its public boards and committees, and actively engage with NLM in improving its products with constructive criticism

and honest approval. However, any potential advantages in specificity and flexibility of NLM-focused programs are far outweighed by the advantages of a collaborative, partnership approach to diversity recruitment. A partnership approach gives NLM a view into others' work, programs, and goals; makes NLM part of the profession's wider issues and discussions; and provides an opportunity to influence the collaboration with NLM's mission, vision, values, and goals.

NLM has therefore expanded existing partnerships with other organizations to include talent recruitment and retention. Collaborating with existing partners gives NLM access to talent beyond its own staff network, and provides a continuous flow of access to the talent pipeline. Working with existing partners also connects NLM to talent that is vetted by another organization, and to people who are making themselves known and available within the larger job marketplace. Partnerships also offer the potential for shared follow-up and evaluation: if the pipeline dries up or sees a sudden increase, the questions of why and what can be done about it can be assessed and lessons learned and addressed together.

One partnership program with both a library school and an academic health sciences library that NLM actively supports is a collaboration between the University of Arizona Health Sciences Library (AHSL), the National Library of Medicine, and the Knowledge River Program of the School of Information Resources and Library Science (SIRLS) at the University of Arizona (UA) to provide internships in health sciences librarianship to Hispanic and/or Native American students accepted in the Knowledge River Program. The internship opportunity exposes Knowledge River students to career opportunities in health sciences librarianship by providing a working internship at AHSL.

NLM and ARL's Career Enhancement Program

NLM reaches a diversity of potential candidates and partners in its services through its long-standing relationships with library associations. NLM is actively involved in the Association of Research Libraries (ARL), with institutional membership in the association since 1948. The current member representative to ARL, Joyce Backus, associate director for library operations, is the chair of the ARL Diversity and Leadership Committee. NLM is also an active institutional member and partner with the Medical Library Association, the leading organization for health sciences librarians in the United States. NLM also partners with the Association of Academic Health Sciences Libraries (AAHSL) in a Leadership Fellows Program for mid-career health sciences librarians who aspire to positions at the more senior level, including those seeking positions as a director. This program, too, takes an inclusive approach in identifying program participants.

ARL's Career Enhancement Program (CEP) is one example of a successful partnership in diversity recruitment. The ARL CEP, funded by the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS), offers master of library and information science (MLIS) or equivalent students from underrepresented racial and ethnic populations within the United States a career-enriching internship at an ARL member library, coupled with extensive support and career development from ARL. The program includes attendance at the ARL Annual Leadership Symposium, held in conjunction with the American Library Association Midwinter Meeting, a six-week internship at an ARL CEP partner library, and mentorship. The Annual Leadership

Symposium brings leaders and potential leaders together for discussion, networking, and professional development. Leaders from CEP partner libraries attend the symposium, meeting the students who will join their libraries for summer internships, when their staff will be able to highlight the opportunities for librarians in research libraries to these interns who reflect the diversity found in the student population of ARL universities.

Following decades of experience with its own Associate Fellowship Program, NLM has participated as a partner library during the six years to date of CEP from 2009 through 2015. NLM hosted 14 fellows in a variety of settings such as the History of Medicine, the National Network of Libraries of Medicine Office, Specialized Information Services, Reference and Web Services, Exhibits, and Preservation. The internship projects ranged from market research and the creation of an outreach plan for online exhibitions, to research supporting a traveling exhibition on Native Hawaiian healing, to documentation for NLM's participation in the Medical Heritage Library, to analysis of online customer service satisfaction index data.

NLM also complemented the CEP projects with professional development activities during the fellowship, following an 80/20 rule of 80% project time and 20% professional development time. In the 20% of professional development time, the students met with senior leadership and participated in a new managers' discussion—new managers at NLM, coming from academe or other government agencies, shared with the students what new managers can expect, what surprises they encountered, and what kinds of work had to be given up in becoming a manager. The CEP fellows also participated in a *Résumé Review*, where hiring managers reviewed the students' résumés and offered tips for successful federal or industry résumés and academic curricula vitae. The students took field trips in Washington, DC, to the ARL offices, the Government Printing Office, and the Library of Congress. At the Library of Congress they participated in a discussion of what makes a successful exhibit and followed that with trips to visit exhibits at museums in the area. The students also had an opportunity to extend their peer network by attending a new librarians' discussion with NLM staff who were recent library science graduates.

Each CEP fellow at NLM was assigned a mentor from a division other than the one in which the student was working to provide a safe space for discussion and voicing any concerns. The 14 ARL CEP fellows who interned at NLM are now a cohort of alumni participants and many mentors keep in touch with their fellows. NLM recently contacted the fellows to find out where they are now. All of the NLM ARL CEP fellows were employed, or still in school; one is now a program analyst at the Institute of Museum and Library Services. NLM uses their post-internship stories to celebrate the completion of the program and share their outcomes at a meeting of all Library Operations staff, bringing to the staff's attention the mentorship, supervision, and inclusion of the fellows in NLM work life.

NLM, MLA, and ALA's Spectrum Scholarship Program

Prior to the ARL CEP fellows program, NLM actively engaged in the support of library science students through annual sponsorship of two of the American Library Association's (ALA) Spectrum Scholars, in partnership with the Medical Library Association (MLA). This support extended efforts NLM already

had underway in providing MLA with support for its minority scholarship program. The Spectrum Scholarship Program is a national diversity and recruitment effort, offering scholarship support and attendance at a leadership program at the American Library Association's annual meeting, for library science students from underrepresented populations. NLM/MLA's support of the Spectrum Scholarship began in 2001, supporting a single student and expanded in 2006 to support two students annually. The MLA provided a mentor for the students.

In 2009, NLM sought an assessment of its nearly 10-year investment in the Spectrum Scholars program. The American Library Association Office of Diversity provided follow-up data on the Spectrum Scholars supported by NLM, indicating that four were employed in health sciences libraries, four were employed in other libraries, and the whereabouts of four were unknown. At the same time, ALA was actively engaged in its first follow-up and evaluation of the Spectrum Scholars program, so aggregate data on the group was expected later. NLM, however, realized that it had little connection to the scholars beyond the named connection of the financial support of tuition. NLM discussed what factors would have an impact on recent library science graduates and how NLM could make a stronger connection with them.

As a result of this assessment, in 2009 NLM began offering a one-day visit to NLM for its named Spectrum Scholars. The scholars' trip is paid for by NLM, and during the visit the students meet with senior leadership and with the staff of the National Network Office, which oversees the National Network of Libraries of Medicine, a 6,000-member network of health sciences libraries, public libraries, and community-based organizations engaged in the provision of health information for the public. The students also meet with staff in program areas of interest, including Big Data, Reference, Outreach, and Preservation. This early visit in the careers of library science students—often the visit takes place before the student even begins school—could have a profound effect on a student's interests. In some cases the early visit to NLM has influenced choice of courses and presented new options in career paths. These visits also offer staff an opportunity to be in touch with the scholars, further extending the connection.

Conclusion

Since partnering with ARL, ALA, and MLA in diversity programs, NLM has seen ARL CEP fellows and ALA Spectrum Scholars appear in its recruitments for open positions and for the NLM Associate Fellowship Program. After the ALA/MLA/NLM Spectrum Scholars visited NLM, one scholar became a self-described "NLM fan" and several others have applied to the NLM Associate Fellowship Program, with one scholar joining the 2014–2015 NLM Associate Fellowship cohort. Two of the ARL CEP fellows joined NLM on staff.

The successes NLM has realized from a pipeline that routinely delivers a diverse and talented pool of future colleagues appear to be due to multiple factors. One scholarship or one internship is unlikely to be the only deciding factor in the direction a new professional takes as the next career step. Instead, scholars and fellows require financial support, practical support, mentorship, project opportunities, and the guidance of mentors offering the sign that says "this way" as they think beyond a job to having a career, and about what it takes to make a difference in their chosen profession.

As this article is being written, NLM is actively recruiting recent library science graduates to fill over a dozen open positions across Library Operations and other NLM offices. In the context of that recruitment, NLM is seeing the benefits of being able to use the existing relationships with the ALA Office of Diversity to reach the Spectrum Scholars, and with ARL, to reach not only the ARL CEP Fellows, but all of the recent graduates who are or were participants in ARL diversity programs. It is exciting to see the work of many years' duration in supporting and mentoring these students pay off in this current recruitment. Of the over 200 applicants to the positions, many listed participation in some type of diversity program, either through ALA, ARL, or through the Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities (HACU) Internship Program held at the Library of Congress.

The next steps for NLM are to continue to support the talent pipeline through partnerships, seeking to be part of programs that offer systematic and multi-pronged support for students. And the step after that will be to mentor and support its diverse staff in developing medical information products and services that meet the needs of the changing United States population.

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Strategically Focusing on Focus Groups to Improve Organizational Climate

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Complementing several successful implementations of the LibQUAL+ survey to assess library service quality, the University Libraries at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro (UNCG) decided to engage the ClimateQUAL survey¹ in 2011 to gain perspective on changes that were occurring within the library staff organization as well as within the profession overall. At the time, the profession was seeing a greater need to justify resources and expenses overall, and the UNCG University Libraries was strategically implementing decisions made due to budget cuts, which impacted some positions and work flows within the organization.

UNCG Libraries convened a ClimateQUAL team that included the associate dean for public services, the assistant dean for administrative services, the human resources librarian, and the reference and diversity librarian in order to prepare and organize the libraries for administering the ClimateQUAL instrument. This team regularly consulted with the dean of libraries throughout the entire process.

The UNCG Libraries launched the survey in the fall of 2011, following several organizational changes either recently completed or announced within the organization, as well as a substantial budget cut for that year. It should also be noted that salary increases had been denied by the state for the previous three years and other departments on campus were conducting layoffs. No layoffs occurred at the University Libraries.

The UNCG ClimateQUAL team marketed the survey well to the entire libraries staff and arranged for special considerations in taking the survey, as well as activities surrounding the “event” such as refreshments. The team also explained and oriented staff to the survey protocol prior to implementation and answered staff questions in advance so as to ensure understanding of the survey’s purpose and use.

The team presented the survey in conjunction with the University Libraries’ mission statement, statement of values, and current strategic planning, asking staff to reflect upon organizational attributes as they were reflected by these collective commitments.

UNCG Summary Data and Results

The UNCG Libraries achieved a 91% completion rate for staff taking the survey and presented results to the staff in the spring of 2012. Results were first shared as statistics and pie charts but were later simplified for ease of understanding and to facilitate the process of identifying issues that warranted attention.

UNCG Climate Measures with Highest Scores

The following is a list of the 10 climate measures that the survey results showed as the University Libraries’ “Strong Areas.” The percentages reflect the number of employees who positively responded to the questions in each scale.

“I agree, University Libraries has a climate for…”	UNCG	Average of all ClimateQUAL Libraries as of 2011
the extent to which the library supports diversity related to sexual orientation. (Climate for Sexual Orientation)	97%	92%
the extent to which the library supports diversity related to race. (Climate for Race)	96%	90%
the extent to which the library supports diversity of gender. (Climate for Gender)	90%	89%
the degree to which equality between minorities and majorities is valued; the extent to which the library values diversity and diversity related initiatives. (Climate for Valuing Diversity)	89%	78%
valuing the usefulness and importance of teamwork. (Climate for Benefits of Teamwork)	88%	82%
the degree to which employees perceive their work is important. (Climate for Task Engagement)	86%	87%
the degree to which employees of authentic transformational leaders report these leaders as being highly transparent—that is, that the transformational leader is consistent in the actions, and that the leader truly believes what he/she claims he/she believes. (Climate for Authentic Transformational Leadership)	85%	72%
the degree to which employees perceive the quality of their relationship with their immediate supervisors. (Climate for Leader-Member Relationship Quality)	84%	79%
the degree to which new ideas are encouraged, accepted, and rewarded among co-workers. (Climate for Innovation)	83%	80%
the degree to which one perceives there is fairness and respectfulness between employees and supervisors. (Climate for Interpersonal Justice)	82%	81%

These results seem to indicate a healthy organizational environment with regard to most diversity issues and this was generally supported by the comments. However, areas of concern did exist, as the next section illustrates, so measures were sorted and compared to all ClimateQUAL libraries in order to help the libraries focus on the areas in greatest need of attention.

UNCG Climate Measures with Lowest Scores

The following is a list of the 10 climate measures that the UNCG survey results showed as the lowest scores.

"I agree, University Libraries has a climate for... "	UNCG	Average of all ClimateQUAL Libraries as of 2011
the extent to which rewards received adequately reflect level of effort and work (Climate for Justice—Distributive Justice)	30%	29%
the organization’s structure and policies facilitate and encourage teamwork (Climate for Teamwork—Structural Facilitation of Teamwork)	51%	48%
fairness of procedures used to determine rewards; performance evaluations, etc. (Climate for Justice—Procedural Justice)	59%	47%
the extent to which an individual feels they can contribute to their team (Climate for Psychological Empowerment in the Workplace)	63%	60%
the degree to which employees exhibit satisfaction with their work (Climate for Job Satisfaction)	68%	93%
the degree to which an organization or teams therein encourage employees to freely share opinions with each other and with management (Climate for Psychological Safety)	70%	67%
the degree to which you feel you have access to the information you need (Climate for Justice—Informational Justice)	70%	62%
the extent to which an individual employee is dedicated to staying with, and feels positively about, this organization (Climate for Organizational Commitment)	71%	66%
the consistency of application of procedures across subgroups (Climate for Deep Diversity—Standardization of Procedures across Groups)	73%	68%
continual learning that has policies, practices, and procedures that emphasize continued employee education (Climate for Continual Learning)	73%	68%

Improvement Themes

The UNCG ClimateQUAL team first shared these results at a University Libraries All Personnel Meeting. Later, the team held smaller information sessions in which individuals could ask questions and discuss perceptions of the results. From those sessions, the team decided to focus on three areas that were the most significant concerns of the staff:

- **Climate for Justice—Distributive Justice—extent to which rewards received adequately reflect level of effort and work**

Data: UNCG ClimateQUAL: 30% agreement; all ClimateQUAL libraries: 29% agreement

Desired Change: Need to implement rewards, recognition, and appreciation for effort and work. Recognizing limitations to providing rewards locally, what else can be addressed to demonstrate value for work performed?

- **Climate for Teamwork—Structural Facilitation of Teamwork—organization’s structure and policies facilitate and encourage teamwork**

Data: UNCG ClimateQUAL: 51% agreement; all ClimateQUAL libraries: 48% agreement

Desired Change: Need to develop a climate for teamwork among exempt, i.e., librarians, and non-exempt, i.e., paraprofessional, employees. (Challenge: disparity in the treatment of non-exempt employees compared with exempt employees or how to align responsibilities of different levels to capture benefit for both groups).

- **Climate for Justice—Procedural Justice—fairness of procedures used to determine rewards; performance evaluations, etc.**

Data: UNCG ClimateQUAL: 59% agreement; all ClimateQUAL libraries: 47% agreement

Desired Change: Need to build faculty and staff trust in library administration and the strategic planning process. (Challenge: top-down decision making with little input from exempt and non-exempt employees).

Focus Groups

The UNCG ClimateQUAL team decided to conduct a series of focus groups in order to gain a deeper understanding of the three most significant concerns so that the libraries could address them effectively. The team engaged the university’s Office of Conflict and Peace Studies to assist in this endeavor. In preliminary information sessions, the team informed library staff that focus groups would occur and would be facilitated by a third party. One session was set aside specifically for managers and supervisors so that they did not attend sessions with other staff. These separate sessions were offered in order to provide a safe environment in which non-supervisory staff would feel comfortable speaking up and expressing their opinions.

Sample Focus Group Questions

The team used the feedback in the information sessions to develop start-up questions for the focus group facilitators to use. Following is a list of sample questions:

Climate for Justice—Distributive Justice—rewards, recognition, and appreciation for effort and work

- Do you feel valued for your efforts? Why or why not?
- What do you like best about working in the University Libraries?

- To what extent do rewards (recognition and appreciation) received adequately reflect level of effort and work?
- Understanding the limitations on providing direct salary treatment, what other rewards or recognition should be in place to acknowledge accomplishments or reward above-average effort?

Climate for Teamwork—Benefits of Teams and Structural Facilitation of Teamwork—organization's structure and policies facilitate and encourage teamwork

- Considering the climate for teamwork among exempt and non-exempt employees, do you feel there is disparity in the treatment of non-exempt employees compared with exempt employees?
- What are the biggest problems with feeling like there is a lack of teamwork among exempt and non-exempt staff?
- If you could build a new non-exempt and exempt team concept, what would you put in to make a better one?

Climate for Justice—Procedural Justice—fairness of procedures used to determine rewards, performance evaluations, etc.

- Do you feel that information that could impact your job is communicated appropriately and shared evenly?
- Do you feel that decisions are made with appropriate input from the larger organization?

Climate for Job Satisfaction

- When you think about job satisfaction, what is the first thing that comes to mind?

Focus Group Process and Outcomes

Three focus groups were conducted by the Office of Conflict and Peace Studies—each one was themed to capture summary information that pertains to the measure under consideration. As a matter of process, the focus group facilitators highlighted contributions in each meeting in order to document the conversations. These highlights represent the raw data or comments made during the focus groups that then provide issues for further discussion or analysis. Review of this data—presented graphically in the accompanying word clouds that visualize the frequency of the appearance of specific words in the raw data (Figures 1–3)—can be useful in providing context for the team's recommendations and actions.

The focus group facilitators synthesized the raw data into basic recommendations with help from the ClimateQUAL team to understand terminology and context. The team then shared the recommendations with managers and supervisors starting with the Administrative Advisory Group.

The AAG (Administrative Advisory Group) is the group made up of assistant/associate deans, department heads, and functional coordinators. The AAG meets once a month, chaired by the dean of the University Libraries. This group was seen as needing to improve communication so that library staff could feel more in touch with decision making and actions impacting the whole of the organization. The feedback recognized the “fear culture” generated in part by larger issues within the campus and economy but challenged the leadership to inform and communicate better. Some summarized desires raised in the focus groups include:

- More transparency in decisions related to staffing and workflows, especially between departments
- More visibility of AAG with staff by interacting at a level to understand job functions better and to gain perspective on workplace needs
- Better recognition of individual efforts, especially when no ability to reward monetarily
- Support for staff development opportunities that benefit both the work place and personal enrichment
- Two-way communication channels that provide the ability to obtain answers or be informed in a timely way and without retribution
- Look at how exempt and non-exempt employees are treated differently and not given the same opportunities
- Address concerns about departments working in silos and creating a culture of being inflexible or unresponsive to the needs of other departments

Strategic Actions for Improvement

The AAG and the UNCG ClimateQUAL team began developing improvement strategies to address the concerns raised in the focus groups.

Instituting a Staff Recognition Week

One of the major actions taken by the administration was the development of a Staff Recognition Week in which a series of events would take place during a week identified as low impact in order to allow everyone to participate. A revamped Staff Development Committee was charged with soliciting organizational feedback as to staff members’ desires and development needs and with programming the event. The committee solicited staff input through an assessment survey given to the entire staff.

Staff Recognition Week has now taken place twice with smaller single-event activities occurring in the intervening periods. Events and activities are classified or respond to specific needs as derived from the ClimateQUAL data-driven focus groups. Examples of these event types are: personal enrichment, job-related skills, health and fitness, teamwork, career enhancement, and communication techniques and

styles. Suggestions for events are solicited from the staff. The events have a foundation within a diverse set of experiences of existing staff as well as expertise brought in from outside the libraries.

Periodic Town Hall Meetings

Another strategic action developed from the ClimateQUAL and focus group results directly impacted communication and how to approach sharing information with the entire staff. Traditional communication with the entire staff took place twice a year in an All Personnel Meeting presentation format. Administrators, department heads, and anyone else needing to report information were invited to present at this meeting. From the focus group feedback, this was determined to be seen as one-way communication only and not effective in providing a venue to have a discussion and explain details or reasoning behind programs, actions, or decisions. The University Libraries has now adopted a town-hall style meeting format so that discussion can occur and everyone is invited to speak up to ask questions, seek clarification, or present an opposing viewpoint. Topics and agendas are sent out in advance so that staff have a chance to prepare and meetings are held more frequently so that each single meeting is not overly stuffed with information that becomes rushed or pushed.

More Visible Appreciation and Recognition

The University Libraries has also put more appreciation gestures into play so that staff members see examples of appreciation more frequently. This includes lower-cost events, such as a cupcake truck that comes to the building and allows everyone to select a cupcake of their choice; more communication with all staff regarding individual accomplishments; and a higher level of recognition for special assignments, committees, task force completions, or team accomplishments to validate that the work performed was appreciated.

Enhanced Information Sharing across All Staff Levels

Another strategy has been to provide more opportunities for information sharing across non-exempt and exempt staff activities. This includes activities such as sharing presentations, collaborating on projects and information sessions that further explain the role of both professional activities and paraprofessional activities.

Regarding communication, in particular communication from the Administrative Advisory Group, several elements from the focus group feedback were identified for coaching performance. These are ongoing discussions in which members of the AAG are encouraged to share best practices regarding their technique and style. Examples are:

- More specific information from town-hall meeting to be presented into department meetings
- Managers/supervisors need to be more visible throughout the day to all employees
- Staff members should be engaged by managers/supervisors as to their daily work activities to demonstrate that they are valued
- Department heads should work with employees on scheduling flexibility as needed or requested

Communication also appeared to be random and inconsistent, based on the focus group feedback. A strategy to address that came in the form of a portal for staff communication named “Behind the Stacks.” This is a web-based SharePoint portal that links various specialty blogs and provides highlights or announcements for daily events. The portal also includes links to forms and information as well as committee actions and minutes. The specialty blogs provide venues for both personal information, such as birth announcements, selling personal items, etc., and organization-related information, such as human resource information, campus events, and organizational news.

Re-Opening the Open House

A final strategy that the libraries revisited from the past was an open house concept for library departments to share with one another their work and activities. Departmental open houses are scheduled on a monthly basis. During its open house the department provides information within the work space as to what happens where, and then staff members are present to explain work flows, concepts, etc., and how they are contributing to the department’s goals and objectives.

Conclusion

As of this writing, the libraries completed the ClimateQUAL survey three years ago but most of these strategies put into place from the focus group feedback are less than two years old. It is the organization’s intention to reassess in 2015 how these strategies have impacted the organizational climate. Early feedback has been positive, indicating that issues raised have at least been acknowledged if not addressed. In addition, the University Libraries has developed spin-off committees focused on creating recognition and rewards ideas and events, as well as a group looking at ways to improve Behind the Stacks communication.

The University Libraries has continued to experience budget cuts as well as witness other campus actions that have impacted colleagues and friends. The actions that the organization has taken based on the ClimateQUAL survey and resulting focus group feedback have kept staff more informed and better satisfied about decisions being made. The UNCG ClimateQUAL team is optimistic that this experience has made a positive change to the organization.

Endnotes

- 1 ClimateQUAL®: Organizational Climate and Diversity Assessment is an assessment of (a) library staff perceptions of the organization’s commitment to the principles of diversity, (b) staff perceptions of organizational policies and procedures, and (c) staff attitudes. ARL, in partnership with the University of Maryland Industrial/Organizational Psychology Program, offers the ClimateQUAL protocol to the library community. For more information about ClimateQUAL, see <http://climatequal.org/>.

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Developing Inclusive Research Libraries for Patrons and Staff of All Abilities

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One in five Americans lives with a disability; more than half of them live with a disability that significantly impacts how they accomplish day-to-day tasks.¹ Almost one in seven Canadians reports having a disability; about half of them consider their disabilities to be “severe” or “very severe.”² Unsurprisingly, those numbers increase with age so, as the population lives longer, there will be more and more people managing a wide range of disabilities in libraries. Additionally, in the US, growing percentages of students with disabilities have been enrolling in postsecondary education over the past few decades,³ resulting in greater representation of students with disabilities among the overall population of undergraduate and graduate students.⁴

The issue of invisible disabilities is gaining increasing importance and awareness. It is impossible to know how many Americans live with mental health or cognitive disorders, reduced hearing or vision or mobility, learning differences, chronic disease, or other conditions that create difficulties in the performance of jobs and life tasks. Many individuals refrain from identifying their disabilities out of fear of job loss, discrimination, or simple unawareness that adjustments could make their lives more comfortable. It is essential that library workers develop an awareness of the full range of human difference in abilities in order to be best prepared to interact with all patrons and colleagues in a respectful, supportive, and inclusive manner.

Canadian and US Law Regarding Accessibility

In Canada, the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA, 2005) is a provincial Ontario legislation that is proactive in terms of setting out specific deadlines for compliance—outlining milestones that institutions are obliged to meet—such as making library print collections accessible on request (January 2015), ensuring that the institutional website meets accessibility criteria set out in WCAG 2.0 (January 2013, ongoing), and ensuring that staff have been trained to provide inclusive customer service to patrons of all abilities (January 2012). The Canadian Copyright Act also provides legal framework in the form of exceptions for institutions acting on behalf of individuals with disabilities. It is anticipated that the AODA legislation will ultimately be adopted nationally with provinces such as Manitoba and Nova Scotia slowly rolling out their provincial laws based on the AODA.

Most research library administrators in the United States are familiar with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). The ADA, established in 1990, defines an individual with a disability “as a person who has a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities, a person who has a history or record of such an impairment, or a person who is perceived by others

as having such an impairment. The ADA does not specifically name all of the impairments that are covered.”⁵ The ADA “prohibits discrimination on the basis of disability in employment, State and local government, public accommodations, commercial facilities, transportation, and telecommunications. It also applies to the United States Congress.”⁶

Compliance with the ADA regulations is an important goal for every library in the nation, whether public, special, or research in nature and focus. The American Library Association (ALA) recognizes that libraries may play a major role in the lives of patrons of all abilities; therefore, ALA has particularly emphasized providing inclusive services, removing structural barriers, stocking accessible library materials, integrating assistive technology, recruiting people with disabilities, and educating librarians on disability issues.⁷

Complaints about noncompliance with the ADA rules are investigated and, when necessary, acted upon by the US Department of Justice and the Department of Education. There already is a lengthy list of cases taken to court in the form of briefs, summary judgments, settlements, and other legal documents such as complaints before both departments, indicating that enforcement in this area is taken very seriously.⁸

The basics of physical accessibility for any library building include designated parking spaces in close proximity to the building, ramps if there are steps at entrances, low-energy or automatic door opening devices, and, of course, elevators if there is more than one floor in the building. As far as structural specifications for libraries are concerned, Section 8 of the ADA Accessibility Guidelines, effective January 1, 2009, covers most aspects of these, including reading and study areas, check-out areas, card catalogs, and magazine displays. Very definitive minimum measurements are listed for aisle space clearance (for the passage of wheelchairs) and the height of tables and displays, as well as other features of the library setting. The width of the stacks is also accounted for, although the height of stacks is not regulated.⁹

Universal design is a desirable goal for all libraries and all public buildings because, as the name implies, it serves everyone well—the very young, the very old, and those individuals both with and without disabilities.

In addition to the ADA regulations, another federal agency, the US Architectural and Transportation Barriers Compliance Board (ATBCB or Access Board) issues guidelines to ensure that buildings, facilities, and transit vehicles are both accessible and usable by individuals with disabilities.¹⁰ Universal design is a desirable goal for all libraries and all public buildings because, as the name implies, it serves everyone well—the very young, the very old, and those individuals both with and without disabilities.

Just as the physical aspects of accessibility must be carefully considered in any library construction or renovation, under Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act, the library’s electronic communications must also strive to be compliant with ADA website requirements to provide equal access. This is a somewhat complicated area because, since the Obama Administration is committed to increasing improving access to government information and data for all people, the most stringent regulations pertain to federal, state, and local governmental agencies, whereas the rules for the private sector are not as clearly stated. However, although there are as yet no specific published technical ADA requirements vis-à-vis the

Internet, the US Access Board recently released a proposed rule updating Section 508,¹¹ which gives a good sense of the direction the government is heading. There is still a level of risk for inaccessible websites, and many organizations have already been sued for noncompliance under the ADA. Nevertheless, there are guidelines produced by university webmasters that can be used as touchstones for research library website accessibility, e.g., Web Accessibility at the U-M (<http://hr.umich.edu/webaccess/>). The University of Michigan guide states: “Accessibility means making your site available to the widest possible audience—which includes able-bodied users. It is helpful to think of accessibility as being like its sibling, usability. In fact, it is impossible to separate the two, and improving one improves the other.” Additionally, ARL has developed a Web Accessibility Toolkit (<http://accessibility.arl.org/>) that illuminates model policies and resources for a wide range of digital accessibility issues. (See sidebar for more about the ARL Web Accessibility Toolkit.)

The ADA regulations serve as the locus where the staff of each library should start as they examine how effectively they are serving users and staff with disabilities. But if that is where the library stops, it fails to truly meet a goal of accessibility to all users. The library should reach above and beyond the letter of the law to achieve the true spirit of inclusiveness.

Web Accessibility Toolkit for Research Libraries

ARL maintains a Web Accessibility Toolkit for the ARL membership and the broader library community. The toolkit aims to:

- **Promote** the principles of accessibility, universal design, and digital inclusion.
- **Help** research libraries achieve digital accessibility.
- **Connect** research libraries with the tools, people, and examples they need to provide accessible digital content.

The Web Accessibility Toolkit provides library leaders with model policies, licensing language, a community of practice, and other resources to establish effective, accountable plans for meeting legal and ethical obligations to create an accessible, inclusive environment.

Try out the toolkit at <http://accessibility.arl.org/>.

Send comments or questions to accessibility@arl.org.

Library as Campus Leader

A research library is at the crossroad of its various constituencies. The library typically will serve a wide range of researchers from the most entry-level to the most advanced, from youthful to elderly. These researchers will need to use information available in digital, paper, and even micro-formats, and the information may be in the form of words, data, images, maps, audio, video, and more. The library provides consultations, classroom instruction, high-tech equipment, physical and virtual environments, and numerous other services suited to the needs of their user populations. How is it possible for a library

to be prepared for the intersection of researchers—who may have any of a number of disabilities of varying severity—with the array of services and resources the library provides? Attention, inclusion, awareness, flexibility, humility, and creativity will position the library to provide the best possible service with the potential to stand as a model for the institution as a whole.

A mental readjustment to focus on **accessibility and equity** and away from **disability and accommodation** is a shift from a problem-based model to one rooted in fairness instead. Accessibility should be at the front end of new innovations and programs, built into planning and design processes as a critical component of the model. Tacked on at the end, the opportunity to maximize effectiveness is lost as makeshift adjustments and add-ons reduce the likelihood of the fullest and most complete access. An example is the expanding move to use Google products in academic enterprises. Google did not consider accessibility in creating its popular e-mail, calendar, and other services. Now, as more and more institutions move to Google for a wide range of reasons—financial, user familiarity, general ease of use—post-hoc adjustments must be made for those who use assistive reading technology, since Google products do not work well with such tools.

While the idea of creating policies may seem contradictory to responding rapidly to user needs, the development or adoption of new technology and services could benefit from policies that insist on step-by-step evaluation of the match of these items to accessibility. When the newest aggregator database vendor assures a library's electronic resources officer that its database is fully accessible, it will be up to the buyer to confirm these claims. Details on the vendor's accessibility testing—for example, what software it used and how many users with disabilities were in its beta test group—should be ascertained and evaluated independent of the vendor's claims. Advocating the value of producing inclusive learning resources will help vendors keep accessibility in mind as they test product proposals with potential buyers is another way to be proactive. The library could also benefit by partnering with campus offices that serve students and faculty with disabilities to identify their own beta test group and hire them to evaluate and put new electronic resources through their paces.

When developing new services, building new facilities, or remodeling old ones, libraries should make it standard practice to include users with disabilities in planning stages. Users of all abilities can pinpoint issues pertaining to physical access that go beyond building codes. It is also good practice to engage with accessibility experts to help the library focus attention on providing maximum accessibility to the broadest possible range of users. It is not always possible for all groups to be represented; however, the library staff still have a responsibility to lobby for inclusivity in all areas of service delivery. Consideration of different experiences and perspectives can spark creative decisions that meet a wider range of needs, encouraging staff to develop “personas” throughout the process of designing a new interface or developing a new patron app. With specific accessibility policies firmly in place, planners of future initiatives will be reminded to be more inclusive, to the potential benefit of a much broader spectrum of researchers and library users.

No policy should ever stand in the way of good service. It should be a straightforward matter for research libraries to assure ready assistance to those who are unable to access book stacks, map cases, computer

workstations, etc. But what does the staff member do when asked to leave his or her work space to assist someone who appears to be fully able to manage on their own? Every library, of course, will vary somewhat in how to handle such requests. But all staff who are likely to interact with users need to learn about accessibility issues, including, and perhaps especially, invisible disabilities.

The Invisible Disabilities Association reports numerous stories of people with chronic fatigue, multiple sclerosis, Lyme disease, rheumatoid arthritis, chemical sensitivities, and other illnesses who are daily challenged about their use of parking spaces designated for “handicapped” users, or their requests for help to carry what may be seen as a very lightweight load.¹² A patron with no visible hearing aid may ask a reference staff person to speak up, while the reference staffer feels he or she is talking quite loudly enough. A student may need a library instructor to slow down or repeat instructions because the student’s cognitive process works differently from that of most other classmates. An otherwise fit woman may request help carrying a small stack of books, because her “frozen” shoulder does not allow her to move her arm. Staff who interact with the public, including student staff who may be the only ones available in the stacks, need to be aware of and sensitive to the possibility that they may be called upon to provide assistance—and users should not be expected or required to disclose or “out” themselves in order to satisfy the curiosity or puzzlement of staff. Another mental shift may take place here—this student is not lazy and this faculty member is not refusing to pay attention to your instructions and this post-doc is not behaving from a sense of privilege and demanding unreasonable service. They may truly need help.

How much support should library staff be trained to provide? This is a judgment call. Patron requests can range from quick questions to more time-consuming tasks. It is important to make sure that library services are designed to be flexible to meet the needs of diverse users, but it is also important to have policies in place to support staff in channeling time-consuming requests to the appropriate bodies within the organization or on campus. All library staff need to collaborate together on building more inclusive learning environments.

Cultural competency is as critical to providing excellent public service as high-level competency in information retrieval. Some library staff might learn the latter through trial and error, but if they are working at an information service point, it behooves the institution to be certain that staff have the necessary skills in information retrieval before they begin interacting with the public, and some libraries may require lengthy training periods and close oversight for new service providers. Unfortunately, libraries do not typically supply similarly robust training and oversight to instill cultural competencies around any differences staff may encounter at service points, in classrooms, or in office consultations, even though most American research institutions draw users from all over the world.

Training staff members to collaborate effectively while assisting researchers with disabilities is perhaps the most important initiative a library can take—one bad encounter with a staff member who is not knowledgeable or who acts inappropriately can permanently sour a patron’s relationship with the library, and word of mouth can easily give others a negative impression of the library even if they have never used its facilities or services personally. One common mistake of library staff reported by several blind library users is that they are not directly addressed when they are accompanied by a companion. Just as a

children's librarian may address a parent instead of the child who is actually doing the library project, the library staff member mistakenly talks to the researcher's companion as if the researcher cannot hear nor speak for him- or herself.

A similar situation sometimes occurs when the patron is a wheelchair user. If the staff member is standing, it helps to sit down, if possible, to be on the same level as the wheelchair user, rather than looming above. Care should also be taken to address deaf or hard of hearing patrons in the manner they prefer, whether through a sign-language interpreter or by enabling them to see the speaker's lips if they are comfortable with lip reading. Again, the library staff member should always address the patron as directly as possible.

Training in interacting with individuals with disabilities can be accomplished by specialists, by institutional or campus partners, and by those with disabilities themselves who are willing to share their views and explain what processes could be put in place to improve accessibility as well as enhance the entire library experience. The opportunity to have a human interaction is often why people come to the library to seek assistance rather than turning solely to Internet searches. Staff awareness, flexibility, and willingness to admit what they do not know—asking patrons how best to help them—can help to achieve the equity that libraries seek for all users in the interest of the best possible accessibility and fairness.

Finally, users must be made aware of library efforts at maximizing accessibility and inclusion. Friendly and effective outreach to communities in which individuals might think of libraries as nothing more than a series of strenuous barriers can encourage use. Making sure that appropriate and adequate parking is available, accessible entries are clearly marked (better yet, make all entries accessible), and building signage makes sense and is readable are all factors that signify that the library prioritizes accessibility and that patrons of all abilities are sincerely welcome. Certainly verifying that students with disabilities are aware of what the library can do for them is important, but faculty, staff, and other users should also know from handouts and readily available web information (that is not buried on the site many clicks deep) how they can make the most of library services. Given the existence of invisible disabilities, marketing should be managed in a way that makes researchers feel that they can “come as they are” and still get good, friendly, non-judgmental assistance from any library staff member they encounter.

Staff with Disabilities

As the Society for Human Resource Management noted in a webcast in the fall of 2013, “If you are a government contractor—and it's possible you may not even realize that you are—sweeping changes in your affirmative action obligations are heading your way. The US Department of Labor has unveiled new rules (under Section 4212 of Vietnam Era Veterans' Readjustment Assistance Act of 1974 and Section 503 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973) that impose new goals for hiring veterans and people with disabilities and requirements for collecting data on applicants, new hires and current employees. The workforce goal for disabled workers is 7 percent; the 'benchmark' for covered veterans is 8 percent; and, the Office of Federal Contract Compliance Programs (OFCCP) has a roadmap for good faith efforts that may be a bumpy ride for federal contractors. The rules require solicitation of applicants to 'voluntarily self-identify,'

once they become applicants as is currently done with gender and race. And that means new forms, processes, and recordkeeping requirements.”¹³

Disabilities broadly defined by the ADA include physical, cognitive, and mental circumstances that have an impact on a person’s ability to accomplish day-to-day tasks, and some of these may be work-related tasks. Some research libraries are likely to be counted as government contractors and will start to see efforts and encouragement to increase employment of people with disabilities. Creating a welcoming, generally accessible work environment in advance will be more appealing to potential staff than promises that changes will be made later if they come to work for the library. Recruiting packets that go to any potential employee should include a number of relevant policies, including institutional or campus resources available to assist in providing appropriate modifications, assurance that disclosure of a specific diagnosis is not necessary for adjustments to be made, and assurance that the institution places a high value on the contributions of individuals with different experiences and viewpoints. This information should be available to **all** candidates, not only those identified as having a disability. It is important that physical requirements in job descriptions are accurate and essential functions to the position. Requirements should not be included to dissuade applicants with disabilities from applying for a particular position. Active recruitment and clear goals for inclusion are encouraging messages to all future employees.

Staff with invisible disabilities may hesitate to reveal them, and often job-advice websites encourage readers not to disclose their disability status before securing a job offer. Knowing from the start of the application process the library’s position to support staff of all abilities will ease the sense of vulnerability and diminish the fear of speaking up. Individuals may disclose their particular needs once employed, or they may make do without accommodations. However, if the library has begun to cultivate a climate of inclusion that considers disabilities as part of that portfolio, it may be easier for staff members to disclose their needs and receive appropriate accommodations that can help them to become their most productive selves.

Modifications to support staff with disabilities are often necessary, and some hiring employers may have concerns about the cost. Recent data suggest that the median cost for such adjustments is about US\$600¹⁴—probably not much more than the cost of equipment for any new staff member.

Conclusion

Whether working with library staff or patrons, to act inclusively means understanding the needs and concerns of people with disabilities, and also means knowing that generalizations do not apply to everyone with a similar disability. A wheelchair user may be able to stand and walk a little; a patron with a guide dog may be partially sighted and not entirely blind—be open-minded and let the patron or colleague tell you what is best for them.

The library is such a vital and pivotal center for so many people that it is incumbent upon its organizers, administration, and employees to make it the best possible venue for inclusiveness for all its staff and

patrons, regardless of their physical or emotional abilities and to provide a model for surrounding departments and units to follow.

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Research Library Issues

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