How to Be More Inclusive in Your Readers’ Advisory Work
An Infopeople Webinar
October 7, 2020

Laurel Johnson, Young Adult Services Supervisor
ljohnson@skokiepubliclibrary.info

Allyson Coan, Advisory Librarian
acoan@skokiepubliclibrary.info
Agenda

• Introduction/ What does inclusion mean?

• Why is inclusion important in readers’ advisory?

• Identifying and Filling Holes

• Call-In Culture

• Questions
What does inclusion mean?
We have to recognize our privilege as selectors, and, more than likely, as white selectors for diverse readers.

-- Amy Koester
Inclusion

Authentically bringing traditionally excluded individuals and/or groups into processes, activities and decision/policy making in a way that shares power. (University of Washington)
Diversity is being invited to the party. Inclusion is being asked to dance.
-- Vernā Myers
Inclusion in Readers’ Advisory

Intentionally and authentically promoting and suggesting titles by authors who are traditionally excluded and/or underrepresented in publishing to your readers.
Why is inclusion important in Readers’ Advisory?
We know publishing has a “diversity problem.”
We need diversity in reviewing, too!
#WeNeedDiverseBooks

Imagine a world in which all children can see themselves in the pages of a book.

Marley Dias
#1000BlackGirlBooks
What Could Go Wrong?
Quite a little bit, as it turns out.

Time and again, marginalized people have seen their stories taken from them, misused, and published as authentic, while marginalized authors have had to jump hurdle after hurdle to be published themselves. Many feel they must fight to receive even a fraction of the pay, promotion, and praise that outsiders get for writing diverse characters’ stories, and that’s when they’re allowed in the door at all. -- Kayla Whaley
#OwnVoices

Use the term/hashtag to highlight books where the creator and main character share some form of marginalization.

---

Corinne Duyvis | buy THE ART OF SAVING T... 🔄 · Sep 6, 2015
Glad important discussions are being had. Would love to be able to walk away with book recommendations. How about a hashtag?

Corinne Duyvis | buy THE ART OF SAVING THE WORLD! ✔️
@corinnduyvis

#ownvoices, to recommend kidlit about diverse characters written by authors from that same diverse group.

1:55 PM · Sep 6, 2015

❤️ 88    📣 90 people are Tweeting about this
A person is not diverse.

A person is Black.
A person is Korean.

But one person is not diverse.

@beingabookwyrm
Windows, Mirrors, and Sliding Doors
Rudine Sims Bishop
Professor Emerita, Ohio State University
Rudine Sims Bishop

Professor Emerita, Ohio State University

- **MIRRORS:** We want readers to see and find reflections of themselves
- **WINDOWS:** Look through and see other worlds and see how they match up or don’t match up to your own
- **SLIDING GLASS DOORS:** allows you to enter that world
- Diversity goes both ways
  - Not just for readers who have been underrepresented or marginalized
- Readers who always find mirrors of themselves get an exaggerated sense of their own self-worth and false sense of what the world is like
“Black readers need to see themselves in narratives outside of racism, slavery, Jim Crow, police brutality.”

“In order to create a safe world for Black people, books that don’t focus on ‘issues’ need to be given just as much space. They provide an opportunity for Black readers to have a moment for themselves, to take a breath, readjust, and simply exist.” -- L.L. McKinney
"Racism is not the only thing to know about what it means to be Black. Our joys, our sorrows, our love, our grief, our struggles to fit in, our families, our accomplishments and our triumphs—these things also matter. Black children matter, and not only the ones killed before their time. You may think you already know that, but history has proved otherwise. ... Black lives are not a problem to be solved or an academic text that can be studied. To recognize Black lives as ones to celebrate, empathize with and care about, here’s your antiracism work: read more fiction by and about Black people.”
Don’t Just Read About Racism—
Read Stories About Black People Living

Because once you can accept that black people are PEOPLE, that we think and feel and love and lose and get pissed and want to be accepted and need connection and like to snuggle and love our loved ones fiercely and FEEL... once you realize that we are just as human as you are, that we have the same emotional range that you have, that we are not some strange breed of humanoid thing that is unthinking and unfeeling and unloving, once you SEE us...

You’ll be able to see you. (And like... start fixing some stuff.)

Article by Nic Stone, cosmopolitan.com, June 8, 2020
I’m seeing Black bookstagrammers and authors say that their pain is laid bare for white and non-Black POC to marvel over, with little meaningful change, and I have to ask myself – what really comes from reading about someone else’s trauma? Are we reading this for our own edification? Do we just say, “wow, that’s horrible” and then go back to our normal lives?

I don’t have the answer. In the case of historical fiction, I read about trauma to get better perspective on world events and dynamics. I read to understand parts of history I knew nothing about. Historical fiction opens a door, but do we walk through it? Do we venture down a different pathway than we did before? I hope so.
Identifying and filling holes
Whose Voices Are Missing?

Sonali Dev’s RWA 2018 Librarians’ Day Keynote

- Take a look at your past acquisition lists.
  - Whom are you allowing to speak? Whom are you silencing?
- Are there rules like benchmarks for how many reviews a book needs?
  - Fight to change those rules
- Is your collection all White?
  - Add 1% of stories that are not White and straight and able-bodied this year.
- Is your collection 80% White?
  - Take that down to 70%
- “FIGHT FOR US
  - Don’t make us do this alone”
- Don’t be complicit in our silencing
  - If you don’t do one single thing differently, you are complicit.
Whom are you allowing to speak and whom are you silencing?
The Diversity Audit

- The first audit
  - Create criteria
  - Establish a baseline
  - Identify holes and trends / patterns
- Establish goals and make improvements
- After some time, repeat the audit
  - Did you improve?
  - Identify holes and trends / patterns
- Wash, rinse, repeat
- Goal is for each subsequent audit to show more diversity than the last
How to Audit

● Choose what you will audit
  ○ Go Big!
    ■ The whole collection
  ○ More manageable
    ■ Part of a collection, book discussion titles, acquisition orders, marketing emails, suggestions

● Create a list of criteria you want to audit
● Evaluate titles
● Calculate the diversity level
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Race</th>
<th>Multiple Choice-- select all that apply</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Race/Ethnicity if not listed</td>
<td>Short answer text</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethnicity/Nationality</td>
<td>Short answer text</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other identity traits</td>
<td>Multiple Choice-- select all that apply</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LGBTQIA+</td>
<td>Short answer text</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disability/Neurodiverse</td>
<td>Short answer text</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religious affiliations</td>
<td>Short answer text</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other pertinent information</td>
<td>Short answer text</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is this an Own Voices book?</td>
<td>Yes, No, Not applicable</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
THIS IS TIME CONSUMING!!!

(and worth it)
Where do we find the books?!
Look Outside of Traditional Sources: Instagram

7 Queer Bookstagrammers on Books and Accounts They Love

10 Bookstagrammers All About Diversity in Literature That You Need to Follow

20 Bookstagrammers of Color to Follow in 2020

24 Black Bookstagrammers Who Should Be On Your Radar
Black-Owned Bookstores to Support Right Now (and Always)

c/o Libro.fm
Utilize NetGalley’s OwnVoices Category
Nominate titles for LibraryReads
Focusing on Staff AND Patrons

Displays

Staff lists

Book discussion choices
Spring Reading Challenge
Everyday Book Suggestions

Focus on appeals of the book-not just the author’s identity
Censorship vs. Curation

Censorship is the suppression or prohibition of a work (refusing to print content, banning books, etc.)

Curation is the selection and organization of things (your displays, book lists, suggestions)

What you curate is a direct representation of your mission and your values.

-- Women & Children First
How Do You Know If It’s Harmful?

- Gut check
- Evaluate books you suggest most often
- Google TITLE and
  - controversy
  - problematic
- Believe people who say there are problems with representation or stereotypes in the book.
Calling In
Call-In Culture

- Hold each other accountable
- Be courageous
- Team effort
- Be *Here For It* when someone makes you aware of a problematic book
- Goal: don’t want to harm readers or perpetuate anything that is problematic
If you simply stop here, you are complicit. What will you do to make real change in your advisory practice?

Questions?
Allyson: acoan@skokielibrary.info
Laurel: ljohnson@skokielibrary.info