

DEI Snapshot of the University Libraries

Introduction

The University Libraries serve the scholarship and research needs of the University community and the general public. The University Libraries are the principal campus resource for information research, scholarship, and creative work providing a truly diverse and inclusive, global information environment.

Libraries, by their nature, have many moving parts, most of which remain invisible to everyone but the faculty and staff who perform the duties. Here are some of the things that the University Libraries are doing, have done, and would like to do to promote Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) within the college and across the campus. They are divided into three categories:

- Routine -- actions done as part of routine work that move forward the ideal of a more equitable campus by supporting work done elsewhere (e.g. purchasing books for Africana Studies)
- Active -- intentional, direct efforts to make the Libraries' space, services, and collections more diverse, equitable, and inclusive.
- Aspirational -- plans and goals to improve DEI within the college and the university for which support (time, money, etc.) is uncertain or not currently available.

Collections / Acquisitions

Routine –

Part of the process of Acquisitions is ensuring a diversity of resources that serve the needs of the University's programs.

Active --

1. Planning, in collaboration with the Office of Community, Equity, and Diversity, the first student-driven diversity in collection development calls for proposals. Students will be asked to use their expertise to propose the purchase of collections in areas where they feel the Libraries' collections are weak. A panel of students will rank them in order, then Librarians will work with the students to add the books to the collection. The first call went out in March 2021.
2. Acquisitions budget for Africana Studies was doubled in 2020/2021
3. Increased focus on Ebook purchasing to help compensate for reduced access to physical materials during the pandemic (and no physical reserves), with continued ebook purchases after reopening
4. We actively acquire electronic collections and archives focused on the experiences of diverse groups.
5. The collections budget supports multiple open access initiatives that help make scholarly information resources available at no cost to readers worldwide and support the rights of all researchers to participate in the scholarly communications ecosystem as knowledge creators. For details see the [Open Access Initiatives Support page](#).

Aspirational --

1. Hire student workers from diverse backgrounds.

Digital Collections

Routine --

By their very nature, making University resources available via the Digital Commons is equity in action, making the scholarly and creative output of the University available to everyone across the planet regardless of affiliation or resources.

Displays, Presentations, etc.

Routine --

As a centrally located and popular place on the Kingston campus, the Carothers Library often hosts displays from other groups on campus (e.g. The Suffrage Centennial and the annual Holocaust Remembrance Day displays).

Active --

1. On April 20, 2020, in concert with the Multicultural Center, the Library hosted a virtual session with Lorén Spears of the Tomaquag Museum on respectful approaches to collecting indigenous materials for museums and libraries. A second session, on the use of technology during the Standing Rock demonstrations fell victim to COVID-related delays.
2. On June 3, 2019, the Libraries hosted "Centering the Marginal: Toward Inclusivity in the Documentation of Student Struggle," organized by a library faculty member.
3. On November 30, 2017, the Libraries hosted "Building Bridges in a Divisive Climate: Diversity in Libraries, Archives, and Museums."

University Archives & Special Collections

Routine --

1. Providing equitable access to our collections to university and external users.
2. Employing student workers from diverse backgrounds.

Active --

1. Actively focusing on diversifying collections since 2017. For example, after filling obvious gaps in our Poetry and Small Press collections, the work of black, indigenous, and queer authors was prioritized for purchase for those predominantly white collections.
2. The University Archives has been a member of Project StAND (Student Activism Now Documented) since November 2017.
3. Providing paid rather than unpaid internships/practica.

4. Position requested in a 2020 grant proposal was developed based on [Collective Equity](#) (a deliverable of the IMLS-funded National Forum on Labor Practices for Grant-Funded Digital Positions).

Aspirational --

1. Better reflect the diversity of our current and potential users by increasing both the size and diversity of our non-student workforce.
2. Increase in staffing levels would allow our unit to better serve the (primary source) instructional and research needs of the university community
3. Additional secure storage space would allow for the development of more diverse collections

Instruction

Routine –

All instructors in the Libraries are expected to treat the students with respect, regardless of race, creed, sexual orientation, gender identity, or ability. This stance is clear to anyone who teaches for the college, and, while never exercised, failure to live up to this stance would result in disciplinary action.

Active --

1. Most of the teaching faculty attended the three session Community, Equity, and Diversity workshop sequence offered by Annemarie Vaccaro in Spring 2019
2. LIB 350G, *Current Issues of the Information Age*, contains a module on the Digital Divide, one of the more glaring examples of discrimination and economic hamstringing in the information environment.
3. LTI 350G, *Bias: Interrogating the Archive*, teaches students to recognize and consider the broader impacts of personal, institutional, and societal bias including the ways that artificial intelligence's tendency to learn and amplify bias can compound inequalities.
4. Syllabi for some courses (LIB 250, *Information Research Across Disciplines*, for example) include land acknowledgements and diversity statements, and courses incorporate Universal Design principles to accommodate a variety of learning preferences and ensure equitable access to content.
5. Instructors of LIB courses rely on scaffolding and authentic assessment tools that de-emphasize rote memorization and encourage repeated practice to foster the development of critical thinking alongside the acquisition of skills.

Metadata

Routine –

Catalogers are extremely attentive to changing language and alert to places where terms that were once acceptable have become unclear or even slurs. While these changes take place on the national level, the Metadata Librarian follows the process closely, and can attempt to influence changes on a national level.

Active –

Become a part of organizations that encourage change in subject headings and other descriptive language to become more inclusive.

Physical plant

Active --

1. The 24-Hour room provides around the clock access to students who need a place to study or just stay out of the weather.
2. Provision of gender neutral bathrooms.
3. Renovation of Carothers Library restrooms to make them more accessible.

Aspirational --

1. Card access to the 24-Hour room for all students, not just those with residence and/or dining contracts.
2. Replacement of carpet and tiles in various parts of the Carothers Library to reduce trip hazards and make the space more navigable for users with mobility issues.

Public-Facing Staff and Faculty

Routine --

All faculty and staff in the Libraries are expected to treat every patron with respect, regardless of race, creed, sexual orientation, gender identity, or ability. This stance is made clear to everyone who works for the college, and failure to live up to this stance results in disciplinary action.

Active --

Periodic sensitivity training for faculty and staff involving the Office of International Students and Scholars and the Disability, Access, and Inclusion office.

Aspirational --

More and more frequent training.

Staffing

Active --

1. Employing student workers from diverse backgrounds.
2. All faculty and staff involved in hiring participate in Search Procedures workshops hosted by Human Resources, Office of Affirmative Action, and Community, Equity and Diversity.
3. Proposal for 2020-2021 Multicultural Faculty Fellowship Program prepared, but ultimately not submitted for consideration.
4. An IP-1 was hired on a per-project basis to work on diversity initiatives during 2017/2018.

5. All faculty and staff have or are working through the online Preventing Sexual Violence Together training.

Aspirational --

1. Increase both the size and diversity of our faculty and staff to better reflect the diversity of our users.
2. Hire a DEI Librarian and an Accessibility Librarian (these positions have been proposed.)

Training

Active --

1. Safe Zone Training facilitated by the Gender and Sexuality Center held in July 2023
2. In recent years the Faculty Development Committee has offered the following training opportunities to library faculty and staff:
 - “Awakening the mind to hidden bias” with Joanna Ravello, PhD, November 1, 2019
 - “Introduction to Inclusion” with Annemarie Vaccaro, PhD, January 11, 2018

Professional Engagement/Service

Active --

1. URI Academic Affairs Diversity Task Force -- member
2. Boston Library Consortium Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Community of Interest -- members
3. Library faculty participated in the fall 2018 external review of the Office of Community, Equity and Diversity
4. Library faculty presented and/or participated in panels on various related topics at professional meetings and conferences

Aspirational –

Creation of a committee (composed of library faculty, staff, **and** student workers) charged to focus on DEI issues.

DEI Vision Statement for the College of the University Libraries

The primary purpose of libraries is to collect, preserve and provide access to information, in the case of the University Libraries for the primary benefit of students, faculty, and staff, with a lesser responsibility to the people of Rhode Island. We strongly assert that we perform these functions for all patrons, regardless of race, ethnicity, gender or sexual identity, religion, or degree of ability within the boundaries of our academic mission. We most strongly assert that all patrons will be treated with respect for their human dignity regardless of difference or similarity,

although different classes of patrons may receive different services (e.g. Rhode Island residents, including alumni, do not necessarily receive the same services as students).

DEI Goals for 2023 for the College of the University Libraries

- Increase both the size and diversity of our faculty and staff to better reflect the diversity of our current and potential users
- Develop more diverse collections (print, electronic, and in Special Collections)
- Card access to the 24-Hour room for all students, not just those with residence and/or dining contracts
- Review of physical space to ensure accessibility at all locations
- More and more frequent DEI training
- Hire a DEI&A Coordinator
- Develop a committee (composed of library faculty, staff, and student workers) charged to focus on DEI issues
- Complete the first student diversity collection building process with the Office of Community, Equity, and Diversity
- Maintain programming with DEI themes