

ALISS Quarterly

Association of Librarians and Information professionals in the Social Sciences

Information during the pandemic

Coffees and Takeaways - Birmingham City University;
the voices of Mass Observers

Decolonisation and Libraries

University of Portsmouth; University of Huddersfield

Disability

Access without compromise - University of Northampton;
Making the Library's Information and Digital Literacy tutorials
accessible and inclusive - The University of Sheffield;
Disability, Higher education teaching and learning bibliography

ALISS Quarterly Vol. 16 Number 2

January 2021

© The authors

Each article is copyrighted to its author(s) and all rights are reserved. No part of this publication may be reprinted or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, recording or any information storage or data retrieval system without prior written permission from the author(s) and full acknowledgement to *ALISS*.

Editor: Heather Dawson

h.dawson@lse.ac.uk

Published by ALISS.

PROOF

ALISS Quarterly

Volume 16 no.2 January 2021

Editorial

Information during the pandemic

Coffees and Takeaways – two examples emphasising the value of collegiality during a pandemic

Beth Delwiche – Library and Learning Resources, Learning Teaching and Research Services Team, Birmingham City University.

Charlie Hill - Mercian Collaboration Conference Group member. Library and Learning Resources, Customer Services Team, Birmingham City University.

Susan O’Sullivan - ALISS Committee member. Library and Learning Resources, Learning Teaching and Research Services Team, Birmingham City University.

Everyday Lives in the COVID-19 Pandemic; the voices of Mass Observers

Jessica Scantlebury, Senior Archive Assistant.

Kirsty Pattrick, Mass Observation Projects Officer.

Decolonisation and Libraries

Decolonising higher education: Decolonisation – what it is and why we should all care about it

David Bennett, Assistant Librarian - Promotions, Diversity & Inclusion, University of Portsmouth.

Supporting lecturers to diversify their reading lists: the Broaden my Bookshelf Reading List Toolkit

Kate McGuinn, Subject Librarian, University of Huddersfield.

Disability

Taking the stress out of lockdown: access without compromise

Lisa Anderson, Library Service Manager, University of Northampton.

Masniza Sore, Discovery Experience Specialist, University of Northampton.

Making the Library’s Information and Digital Literacy tutorials accessible and inclusive

Sara Needham: Digital Resource Co-creator, The University of Sheffield.

Jo Marsden: Assistive Technology Officer, The University of Sheffield.

Disability, Higher education teaching and learning bibliography

Heather Dawson.

PROOF

Editorial

Welcome to the latest edition of ALISS Quarterly. It has been published by ALISS (Association of Librarians and Information Professionals in the Social Sciences).

In December 2021 ALISS held its first online event: Transitioning to new ways of working – supporting ourselves and our users - the ALISS Christmas hot chocolate and experience sharing event!

There were presentations from committee members including:

- London South Bank University in the Time of Covid
Alison Skoyles, Emma Perry and Dewi Griffin
- Teeside University Student Life services
Fran Porritt, presented by Ian Baird
- Supporting ourselves and our colleagues – Crafty Coffees and The Great Library Takeaway!
Charlie Hill, Susan O’Sullivan, Birmingham City University

Many of these can be viewed online here. <https://alissnet.com/>

They focused on practical tips. From London South Bank University I learnt how a laser pointer could help counter staff demonstrate website features at a safe distance! Birmingham City university also emphasised the need to provide support networks for staff working remotely. The article in this issue discusses their fun but effective ideas relating to craft sessions and experience sharing events.

The other article is from the Mass Observation archive whose work in capturing the experiences of the ordinary public overcame great challenges to preserve a valuable record for the future.

The second section of this issue returns to the valuable theme of decolonisation which has also been to the fore during this difficult year. David Bennett provides an intelligent and insightful discussion of why decolonisation matters to HE library staff and what we can do to begin to address it. A practical example is given in the work of the University of Huddersfield who have developed a toolkit to assist teaching staff in diversifying their reading list content

The final section contains materials on disability. They draw upon papers presented at the The 2020 Northern Collaboration conference which took place online on 18th and 19th November 2020.

Theme: Access, Success, Progress: <https://northerncollaboration.org.uk/content/northern-collaboration-2020-conference>

Staff from the University of Northampton describe how they used the time working from home to focus on learning new skills to audit third-party content databases for accessibility. While staff at the University of Sheffield recount how they assessed and converted information literacy online tutorials to meet new Web content accessibility standards

Keep up to date twitter channel http://twitter.com/aliss_info and by subscribing to our free electronic mailing list LIS_SOCIAL SCIENCE at <http://www.jiscmail.ac.uk/lists/LIS-SOCIALSCIENCE.html>.

We hope you enjoy the issue.

Heather Dawson.
ALISS Secretary
h.dawson@lse.ac.uk

PROOF

Coffees and Takeaways – two examples emphasising the value of collegiality during a pandemic

Beth Delwiche – Library and Learning Resources, Learning Teaching and Research Services Team, Birmingham City University.

Charlie Hill - Mercian Collaboration Conference Group member. Library and Learning Resources, Customer Services Team, Birmingham City University.

Susan O'Sullivan - ALISS Committee member. Library and Learning Resources, Learning Teaching and Research Services Team, Birmingham City University.

First example:

Crafty Coffee – how craft sessions emphasise the value of collegiality

A recent study stated that COVID-19 caused unprecedented challenges to our lives (Waizenegger et al., 2020). Challenges included government enforced homeworking (enforced as far as possible). Some of the participants in this study witnessed weakened boundaries between home and work matters. In the recent study, there was a general agreement that regular scheduled virtual meetings helped lessen the feelings of isolation and maintained a sense of collegiality for the EWFH - *enforced working from home* - participants (Waizenegger et al., 2020).

In addition to EWFH related challenges, several changes currently impact on lifestyles. For example: reduced opportunities for face-to-face interactions; the closure of theatres and cinemas; the cancellation of live performances and the cancellation of many activity workshops and classes. Lifestyles are challenged, we are perhaps involved in fewer activities and life therefore could seem to have intensified. For some - there may be a growing sense of a disconnection.

As a response to circumstances, the *Crafty Coffee* was developed - inspired by the work of Kirkwood et al. (2008) – with a particular focus on *connection*.

Fig. 1 Representation of 5 ways to wellbeing



(Kirkwood et al., 2008).

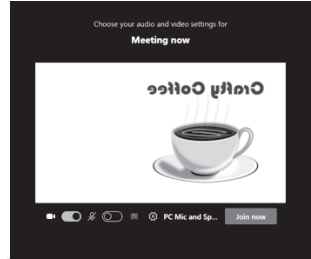
Crafty Coffee is a weekly craft session during an afternoon coffee break. Colleagues who have an existing interest in craft are invited to join in. During this coffee time, colleagues are invited to work on and talk about their craft projects and to share craft related information. *Crafty Coffee* came about because of the impact of COVID-19, more specifically, after Boris Johnson told the country that people must stay at home (March 2020).

Format

A scheduled weekly afternoon craft session during a coffee time - via Microsoft Teams.

Plus - craft related resources, information, and updates (photographs, websites, supplies, platforms, virtual workshops, outdoor workshops, etc.) are shared via a Microsoft Teams chat space.

Fig. 2 Crafty Coffee Microsoft Teams background design.



Craftwork - examples



Fig. 3
Hobbycraft supplies – a painted wreath. Photograph credit: Susan O'Sullivan



Fig. 4
Etsy supplies – a Halloween Trumpkin, a needle felt kit completed during the US elections. Photograph credit: Beth Delwiche

Feedback received

Feedback captures how the Crafty Coffee is received:

"I look forward to this small informal online gathering and attend whenever possible. It's an opportunity to share what other things we've been doing to keep creatively occupied after work or on the weekend. I never thought myself to be a crafter or artist.

Since lockdown, I have taken up wine and liqueur making from foraged fruits, crocheting, felting, designing wreaths, and incorporating foliage from my garden floristry, and colouring greeting cards. Unfortunately, there are not many places where you can easily attend classes or groups in person. It takes me back to the times when colleagues could sit next to each other at the desk or in a café and talk about recent acquisitions of supplies for jewellery making or making pom poms for a scarf.

Having a virtual forum where you can share ideas and inspiration (even if it's only for a short time) is not only a welcome break but adds a sense of togetherness which is priceless these days."

[Anonymous]

Conclusion

Generating a sense of togetherness would seem to have been well received. Inspired by the Crafty Coffee - more scheduled, synchronised, connecting, and collegial activities are

anticipated. For example - a synchronised, collegial, and festive *Ho-Ho-Hot Chocolate* via Microsoft Teams (scheduled 16th December 2020). Moving forward, several potential applications are yet to be considered – including the option to extend this idea to our Birmingham City University students.

References

- Kirkwood, T., Bond, J., May, C., McKeith, I. and Teh, M.M. (2008) *Foresight Mental Capital and Wellbeing Project. Mental capital through life: Future challenges*. London: The Government Office for Science.
- Waizenegger, L., McKenna, B., Cai, W. and Bendz, T. (2020) An affordance perspective of team collaboration and enforced working from home during COVID-19. *European Journal of Information Systems*, 29(4), pp. 429-442.

Second example

The Great Library Takeaway! - how reflections on good practice emphasised the value of collegiality – Charlie Hill.

Introduction

The Great Library Takeaway! a two-hour conference made-up of contributions from different teams within Birmingham City University's Library and Learning Resources department (L&LR), came about as a direct result of my involvement with the Mercian Conference Group (MCG). The MCG arranges the annual conference of the Mercian Collaboration, a knowledge-sharing organisation comprising the Library Services of 23 Higher Education institutions. After a successful gathering in September 2019, the MCG decided in February that as we couldn't predict the level of permitted social interaction six months hence, we would postpone the 2020 event. It was then suggested I arrange an internal Birmingham City University (BCU) get-together instead.

What follows is a look at how *The Great Library Takeaway!* developed from a meeting to share good practice into an advertisement for the value of collegiality.

The original theme – the lessons of good online practice for post-lockdown ways of working

On being encouraged to organise an internal L&LR event, the first thing I did was decide on a theme. Since the start of the 2020 pandemic, university libraries had been required to move resources and services online at great speed. Contained within the logistics of this operational shift were lessons that I felt had implications for future service provision. As such I decided that the event should focus on good practice and be *The Great Library Takeaway!*

"...all about the relationship between this force and this outcome, between change and excellence. It aims to address some key questions: what have we learned from the experience of providing our services during lockdown? What are we doing differently? What insights into the needs of library users have our new ways of working given us? And how can we apply what we have learned from lockdown to improve the services we provide?"
[The Great Library Takeaway! programme, 2020]

Format

Next, I decided on format. The 2019 Mercian Conference had looked at User Experience and the value of involving as many invested parties in as much operational decision-making as possible. In keeping with this ethos, I asked colleagues in L&LR's Customer Services team about their preferences with regard to the format of the event I was planning:

- a) Have you attended any particularly memorable/enjoyable online meetings since the start of lockdown?
 - b) What made them stand out? (format, content etc.)
- [extract from email sent]

Of the twelve people in our team (nine Library Advisors, one Supervisor and two Librarians) I had two replies. This low response rate did not come as a surprise. The rapid increase in video conferencing over the first half of 2020 had seen a new phenomenon emerge: 'Zoom fatigue', or what Psychology Today describes as "tiredness, worry, or burnout associated with overusing virtual platforms of communication" (Wolf, 2020).

Having been reminded of the practical implications of Zoom fatigue, I decided to keep each presentational slot to ten minutes and to divide the event up into two halves, with a 15-minute break. I hoped this format would help to keep the interest of contributors and audience members.

I scheduled a total of eight sessions (including a closing Q&A) with five minutes slack between them. Both halves would be recorded, and a link to each would be sent to everyone in L&LR.

My acknowledgement of the detrimental effects of Zoom fatigue was reflected in the wording of the call for submissions. I sent an email to everyone who worked in L&LR and asked for presentations to be *in the form of a 'takeaway': to-the-point, but also lively and entertaining*. It was at this point I decided on the name of the event.

The event

The event comprised presentations from teams across L&LR. Contributors were representative of various roles and pay grades. The sessions looked at the impact of lockdown on good practice in relation to: collecting statistics; *How to...* events; the online CHAT service; a new seat booking system; publishing deals; digitisation; and academic engagement. I scheduled the first four of these sessions – all of which focussed on Customer Service – for the first half of the event, with the remaining three to follow after the break.

The event ran according to the scheduled timings. The recording of the first half lasted 53 minutes and the second 52 minutes. Only one contributor took more than their allotted ten minutes and the slack I had built into the timings ensured it wasn't by enough to have an impact on the following session.

Approach to hosting

As facilitator / host, I said a few words of introduction at the start of the event and before each session and tried to draw attention to any common ground that appeared between the presentations.

I was keen to keep my contributions informal. In a recent piece about virtual leadership and the use of Zoom, Antonius Tsai talked about the differences between *space* and *place*:

“Places have depth and meaning, they recall past experiences and suggest future opportunities. They bind us together in ways that a space - anonymous, void, undefined—cannot. Virtual spaces are a third kind of space...The Zoom space is different from physical places not just in substance, but also in style. Participants are more distant and there are fewer physical cues” (Holyoak & Tsai, 2020).

To help ensure a successful online meeting, Tsai suggested that “The role of the person leading a virtual space is to transform it into a place. Taking deliberate steps can help you turn Zoom into a place of decision-making, or meaning-making, or brainstorming, or learning” (Holyoak & Tsai, 2020).

Although I was using a different platform (Microsoft Teams), I applied Tsai’s approach and used informality as a way of helping to achieve this transformation. At one point I interjected to inform the audience that we had reached our limit – a single usage – of the phrase *the new normal*.

Collegiality – an organic outcome

As intended, the sessions outlined the way in which BCU’s L&LR had developed online good practice. They also looked at how this could be applied to our post-lockdown operation. In this respect the event might be considered a success. There was however another outcome, which emerged organically over the course of the presentations.

In keeping with its informal nature, I didn’t put in place any mechanisms by which participants and audience members could feedback on the event. However, a Librarian who had contributed a session said afterwards:

“I think this event should happen regularly, as it gives everyone an overview of what the rest of L&LR are working towards”

This shows that in addition to sharing good practice, the event also unearthed some truths about collegiality that may otherwise have remained hidden.

There were two reasons for this. The first was the content of the presentations. Before lockdown, L&LR operated two enquiry services. One – a Helpdesk – was staffed by Library Advisors; another – an online CHAT service – by Librarians. Each team was aware of the other’s role but their understanding was limited. With the closure of the library’s physical spaces however, the operation of the Helpdesk was absorbed into the CHAT service, which was now staffed by Library Advisors *and* Librarians. The implications of this change – and the way it gave each team a more penetrating insight into the working practices of the other – was a recurring theme in the presentations that focussed on Customer Service.

The second reason collegiality became one of the meeting’s significant takeaways, was the format of the event. Involving teams from across the whole of L&LR meant that people were presenting alongside colleagues whose work they would not ordinarily be aware of. Limiting each presentation to ten minutes, whilst allowing for considerably more

substance than a typical elevator statement, meant that contributors had to excise any superfluous content. And lastly, my use of informality to create a virtual ‘place’ meant that both contributors and audience members were more invested in the event than they might otherwise had been, particularly given the effects of Zoom fatigue.

Each of these elements helped create an event from which there emerged an almost intuitive appreciation of collegiality, of the common goals of L&LR, and the importance of collective action in achieving them.

Conclusion

In a recent report into implications for the post-pandemic workplace the Chartered Institute of Personal and Development found that “The issue of collegiality featured strongly in both the list of challenges and benefits [of homeworking], suggesting significant diversity of organisational experiences around this issue” (Beatson et al., 2020). It may be that adopting new approaches to knowledge-sharing – as I tried to with *The Great Library Takeaway!* – helps to ensure that for university library services, the issue is more commonly addressed in a positive manner.

References

Beatson, M., Brinkley, I., Davies, G. and Wilmott, B. (2020) *Embedding new ways of working: implications for the post-pandemic workplace*. London: Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development.

Holyoak, I., Tsai, A. (2020) How to Lead Virtual Meetings. *University of Utah Health Blog*. [blog] 13 November. Available at: <https://accelerate.uofuhealth.utah.edu/connect/how-to-lead-virtual-meetings> [Accessed 15 December 2020].

Wolf, C. (2020) Virtual platforms are helpful tools but can add to our stress. *Psychology Today Blog*. [blog] 14 May. Available at: <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/the-desk-the-mental-health-lawyer/202005/virtual-platforms-are-helpful-tools-can-add-our-stress> [Accessed 15 December 2020].

Everyday Lives in the COVID-19 Pandemic; the voices of Mass Observers

Jessica Scantlebury, Senior Archive Assistant.

Kirsty Pattrick, Mass Observation Projects Officer.

Introduction

What a time to be alive! It feels like we are living in a movie... The country has been in lockdown for seven weeks now and it is starting to get difficult. There were so many things we took for granted before. Popping down to the shops, being able to see elderly grandparents, going to see my friends. (MT_20220_374 response to the 12th May from a teacher)

In 2020 COVID-19 brought a world-wide crisis into being and the UK experienced national disruption on a scale not seen since the last World War. In March the World Health Organisation (WHO) classified the spread of the virus as a pandemic and Britain faced a national lockdown. It was at this moment as the Mass Observation team packed up their laptops for home working, that we hurriedly drafted a 'special' Directive questionnaire to our national panel of regular volunteer writers. Although we knew many of them would have started putting pen to paper, we requested they record their lives at this extraordinary time and continue doing so until we were back in touch. They had done this before without prompting, recording events such as the death of the Princess of Wales and the events on 11th September 2001.

Mass Observation

Mass Observation's founding as a social research organisation in 1937 enabled it to document a unique record of everyday life in Britain during the Second World War. The archive today provides an unparalleled lens into people's lives during this time. The voices of 'ordinary people' which would otherwise have gone unrecorded, shared their most intimate thoughts, opinions and experiences through surveys and diaries.

The Mass Observation Project remains an active source of narrative data with a national panel of volunteer writers. They respond to regular questionnaires (Directives) constructed jointly by the team and through academic commissions on personal, social and political topics. The relationship between the project and panel is a special one of trust, which has been nurtured over many years and decades. A relationship which enables the contribution of in-depth narratives from across the UK.

COVID-19 Collection

At the time, we didn't fully understand the implications of the virus or what lockdown meant. We were concerned that the restrictions would disrupt the postal service and prohibit us from communicating with the Observers who elect to receive our communications through the post. While this didn't happen, we felt confident that our writers would record their reactions to the virus as the situation developed. The 'special' Directive we sent in March, via the post and email, included these questions:

- Have you, or others you know, been affected by the virus? Have you been ill?
- Are you doing anything to protect yourself or others from the coronavirus? Have

you self-isolated? Have you changed your behaviour?

- Have your shopping habits changed? Have you noticed any changes in the availability of food or other goods in the shops?
- What do you think about the UK government's response to the pandemic? We welcome thoughts about any other countries response to Covid-19.
- Where do you get your news about the virus? Have you noticed any jokes, memes or sources poking fun at the virus?

Fast forward nine months to the writing of this article in December and we have received over 6,800 submissions. This includes narrative responses to three further Directive questionnaires in Spring (April), Summer (July) and Autumn (November) along with our annual 12th May day diary call. In 2019, the Archive had received 224 replies to our 12th May appeal. In 2020 we received over 5,000. We also opened our collections policy to collect diaries and reflections on COVID-19 from community groups, special interest groups and U3A groups. In the first few weeks of the first lockdown, we received 534 applications to join the Mass Observation Project and respond to not just the COVID directives but also to Mass Observation Project Directives on other subjects including a recent Directive on the killing of George Floyd, the Black Lives Matter movement and the toppling of the Edward Colston statue in Bristol.

Who wrote?

We are still cataloguing the material and discovering its riches. Some writers contributed a few pages, while others wrote diaries sometimes extending over 70 pages. We also received artworks, poems, and photographic essays. We do know that we have received writing from men, women and those with transgender identities. The youngest writer to contribute is 3 years old, while the oldest is 94. Occupations range from health workers, artists, teaching assistants, police officers, university professors to care assistants. This rich and growing collection of personal writing has come from across the UK and therefore includes regional differences as the pandemic plays out with different restrictions in geographical areas. The writers have all had different experiences of the pandemic. They have self-isolated, being isolated and lonely, had the virus, and not believed in the threat of the virus. Writers have replied generously to our calls to capture COVID. They have responded to our direct questions and recorded their experiences in diary form. Some of them have detailed their movements every day since the beginning of March.

For one Mass Observer lockdown has been a positive experience and writes that *'I'm quite introverted and not very sociable and so it is actually improving my mental health to be at home. I feel far more relaxed and less anxious.'* (G7105 response to Summer 2020 Directive). A woman, whose granddaughter was born on the 12th May, explains that since she found out her daughter was pregnant in October she has been *'dreaming what sort of granny'* she would be. *'COVID-19' has stripped all that away'* she mourns as she feels a sense of loss as she has been unable to attend appointments, scans or be a birthing partner for her daughter. (Ref: MT_2020_6). While another respondent writes that *'My partner was diagnosed with cancer 10 weeks ago... I hate this whole situation, not just Coronavirus but the way it has made this cancer diagnosis worse... We had the important consultation (at Guy's hospital) a day after Boris announced the lock down... I was told I*

wasn't to be allowed in with my partner... Up he went alone. I was allowed to listen in on an open phone line, but as they all chatted and told C he had about 3/4 years left I could hear his crying and there was nothing I could do. I sat at home hunched over my phone tears falling down my face'. (S7280 Spring Directive).

Processing and cataloguing

All their responses are catalogued using a unique code, instead of their name or other identifiable information, which only archive staff can use to match up to their personal information. Writing using a code allows the writer to write with candor and sincerity. This has always been a strength of the Mass Observation Project and researchers such as Olsen et al. (2019) have written about the unique insights that this anonymity offers. Writers also contribute within their own space and time, without limitations on length, format or style, focusing on what is important to them. As a result, their accounts are varied and differ to those that would be produced from an interview (Bytheway, 2009, May 2016 and Smart et al., 2012).

We have found that the material we have received in 2020 has been more outspoken than in 'normal' years. This has meant that we have had to spend more time checking, and redacting where necessary, the responses for obviously identifiable material than ever before. While this is time-consuming, we are certain that the collection offers a method for accessing a series of personal history and individual thoughts and feelings across the rapidly changing circumstances of 2020.

'Today I woke up had coco pops for breakfast and had a shower and started my schoolwork: Science, this and then I will do Maths. I believe I am having chicken or something to do with chicken for dinner today. I have really been enjoying this PS4 game called Plants Vs Zombies... I feel like the government should have started lockdown sooner; when the first deaths had come. I have read three books during lockdown and I am currently reading Who killed Darius Drake, while also reading every day. Every week I do the clapping for the NHS staff, working to help save lives. I also do some virtual quizzes with family and friends'. MT_2020_5 response to 12th May from 12 year-old from Crawley

Research, teaching and outreach

The overwhelming response to our COVID-19 calls provide a collective picture of people's lives across the UK through individual personal testimony during this extraordinary time. Current researchers are already seeing the value of this material with regards to people's responses to political demands during the pandemic (Clarke, 2020) and the value for future Historians (Langhamer 2020). It will provide opportunities across disciplines and interest areas for understanding the lived experience during this pandemic; our actions, thoughts and opinions. Our writers are motivated by many factors to contribute but 2020 has seen not only a rise in writer applications but a drive to record for posterity what will be a marker in Britain's 21st century history.

Next steps

This collection is available as a public resource and can be accessed at The Keep (www.

thekeep.info). The Mass Observation team will be working to make this digitally available and welcome enquiries and conversations regarding its use and potential collaborations for learning, teaching and engagement.

Kirsty Pattrick, Mass Observation Projects Officer

Kirsty is responsible for managing and developing the current Mass Observation Project and supporting partnership research projects across both phases of the Mass Observation Archive, generating new material, increasing its use amongst academic and non-academic communities, collaborating with partners and building its profile for learning, teaching and research. She teaches students in Higher Education across different disciplines, introducing them to archives and developing their research skills using this unique collection. Kirsty joined Special Collections in February 2011 and became a Fellow of the Higher Education Academy in 2013. She is currently undertaking a distance learning MSc in Social Research Methods at the University of Huddersfield. Her role is funded by the Mass Observation Archive Trust.

Jessica Scantlebury, Senior Archive Assistant

Jessica's role supports all the Mass Observation Archive's activities, projects and collaborations, including the contemporary Mass Observation Project and the acquisition of new material. A large part of her role is communicating with the current panel of Mass Observation writers and the cataloguing and care of records in Archive. Her role is funded by the Mass Observation Archive Trust. Jessica joined the MOA team in 2006. Since then, she has completed a postgraduate course in Narrative Research from the University of East London. She is currently undertaking a distance learning Postgraduate qualification in Archives and Records Management at the University of Dundee.

References

- Bytheway, B. (2009). Writing about age, birthdays and the passage of time. *Ageing and Society*, 29(6), 883-901.
- Clarke, N. (2020). Five Lessons for Using Mass Observation's COVID-19 Collections (plus five-ways of solving the problem of representativeness). *Popular Responses to COVID-19*. <https://covidresponsibility.org/blog/>
- Langhamer, C. (2020). Writing Histories of 2020: Initial Perspectives Mass-Observing the pandemic. *Historical Research*, htaa029, <https://doi.org/10.1093/hisres/htaa029>
- May, V. (2016). When Recognition Fails: Mass Observation Project Accounts of Not Belonging. *Sociology*, 50(4), 748–763. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0038038515578991>
- Olsen, Veronica, Taylor, Lou, Whiteley, Kirsty, Ellerton, Annie, Kingston, Paul, & Bailey, Jan. (2019). Exploring public perceptions and understanding of dementia: Analysing narratives from the Mass Observation Project. *Dementia (London, England)*, 147130121986146-1471301219861468.
- Smart, C., Davies, K., Heaphy, B., & Mason, J. (2012). Difficult Friendships and Ontological Insecurity. *The Sociological Review*, 60(1), 91–109. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-954X.2011.02048.x>

Decolonising higher education.

Decolonisation – what it is and why we should all care about it

David Bennett, Assistant Librarian - Promotions, Diversity & Inclusion, University of Portsmouth.

We all have an original nature, with our own authentic wants and needs. We act spontaneously. Then we meet other people. Very soon, who and what we want to become and even who we believe ourselves to be becomes influenced or even defined by others. Such internalised messages can become self-limiting, and the friction between the self-concept imposed from without and a person's true nature within can be painful and may even result in mental ill-health (Dykes, Postings, Kopp, & Crouch, 2017, p. 179). For repressed groups, such as women and Black, Asian and minority ethnicity (BAME) people, the messages received about who a person is and what they should be are often harmful and repressive. These groups are systematically shown that that they do not matter to society, not least through the lack of BAME role models and the abrogation of their cultural heritage. BAME women suffer intersectional repression and are among the hardest hit.

Systems of oppression overlap and interact. BAME people of sexual, ethnic, racial and religious minorities, and women in general, face particularly severe intersectional repression. For example, women, BAME people, and in particular black women, are seriously underrepresented in both higher education and libraries in general. Even in librarianship, where most professionals are women, the number of women, and in particular black women, reaching leadership roles is vanishingly small. Such intersectional oppression makes it even more difficult for them to find acceptance and thereby to learn to accept themselves. The near complete lack of BAME representation in staff makes services less approachable for BAME students, while the lack of BAME representation in the scholarly literature makes examples used in learning harder for BAME students to relate to taught content. Lack of representation imposes psychological hurdles to achievement at all levels and generally makes their lives harder, more stressful and more tiring. To grow up BAME risks being defined and limited by those around you and to see the world through a lens not of your own making.

Taking a step back

To take a broader perspective for a moment, this links tangentially to the marketisation of education, which has focused the education process on the delivery of a marketable graduate product; students have become a known and uniform commodity produced to the specifications of prospective employers. This model is efficient but assumes that students all want and benefit from this deliberate restructuring of thought rather than helping each student grow as an individual. Creating a space in which each student can develop and reach their full potential, with no preconceived ideas of what that might look like or what they might go on to achieve, we might end up with a more versatile, healthier and happier, if less uniform product. Such a humanistic approach would require faith in our students and their ability to right themselves, develop, grow and become the best authentic version of themselves they can be (Dykes et al., 2017). It requires an exploratory library collection be provided to satisfy the curiosity of each student rather than a prescriptive syllabus, and the courage to believe such graduates who know what

they want from life will be as or more employable and/or entrepreneurial than those we currently produce. It is worth noting that this approach to education is dying out despite seeming to sit hand-in-hand with the decolonisation, democratisation and liberalisation of education.

Inclusivity, representation and ‘the attainment gap problem’

In a drive to widen access to higher education, universities recruited more students from ethnic minorities without making adjustments to adequately support them. These pioneers into higher education entered an almost exclusively white culture without reliable role models, texts, perspectives or authorities outside the western, white cultural tradition. It was little surprise that these student BAME pioneers, isolated and uninspired, demotivated by their conspicuous otherness from academic texts and forced to fit into a world where they were made to feel they were being admitted as a favour but did not truly belong, began to drop out or underachieve (Universities UK, 2019). Universities were then attacked by the populist media and accused of admitting people without the academic potential to succeed and damaging education by casting out parts of the accepted scholarly canon for the sake of political correctness (Turner, 2017; “Decolonisation is not a commodity”, 2019).

What is familiar is not necessarily best: western medicine would have stalled for want of Arabic insights, mathematics would have faltered for want of fundamental concept of ‘zero’ from India and the abacus of the far east. If people find change difficult individually, and psychologists confirm they do, history suggests that the inertia that governs groups of people is even harder to overcome. Planning and resourcing change, making small incremental changes, fiddling around the edges, is easy. There is now social pressure on universities for academia to become more inclusive from black academics and social thinkers such as René Eddo-Lodge together with legal pressure from government fundholders to close the BAME attainment gap but there is growing concern that good will and reasonable measures may be insufficient to bring about the revolutionary change many believe is necessary to change an education tradition in the UK that stretches back to before the fall of the Aztec Empire.

The modern decolonisation movement

Hence, we arrive at today’s ‘decolonisation’. The term implies radical activism directed to restructure and refocus education such that it represents world cultures equitably and representatively and exposes students to the full gamut of perspectives that exist. This is more than challenging, it is a revolutionary concept. The accepted canon of authoritative academic literature has historically been written almost exclusively by white men. With the best will in the world, finding authoritative texts, articles and viewpoints that have made it through scholarly publication processes is in itself a challenge. The barriers to black, female and other minority voices in academia therefore reach far beyond universities themselves. Recent conversations with white academics reveals how they are beginning to teach black feminist and queer perspectives in their subject areas in an attempt to embody change and create a space that invites in, engages and empowers minority groups until such time that they can take their place in numbers among the academic community.

While these leading lights work to embody progressive change, academic culture in general finds itself constrained because its authority rests on appeals to established authorities dating back along an unbroken line of intellectual while male thought going back to Antiquity. It recognises worthy new contributions to scholarship by their relationship to and grounding in the established literature of the academic tradition. Overlapping filters of academic style, argument formulation and later dissemination systems have excluded the contributions of women, BAME people, and anyone else not inducted into the ecclesiastical scholarship system. If change is to take place, academia will have to acknowledge its racist inheritance and effect a sea change in the culture of academic, welcoming ideas from much wider literary traditions and critiquing them on their own terms, not necessarily how well they fit the western scholarship model. This is further complicated by the danger of radical differentiation from the tradition: institutions of learning are required to look and feel like they fit into the tradition in order to share in the respect society has for the tradition of the educational process, which is revealed by the aversion to any change to be far more of a love of fetishistic ritual than learning itself.

It remains hard to overcome the invisible barriers integral to the systems that grant authority and govern visibility in academia and western culture in general. They form part of a self-sustaining culture of white, male privilege so ubiquitous and widely accepted that is difficult for white people to notice, and even harder to attack. Di Angelo (2011) characterised the defensive culture of western society when challenged to acknowledge white privilege. Gohr (2017) accused organisational structures of perpetuating institutionalised racism “by upholding white hegemony and normalizing whiteness and the white experience,” and that “to try and ‘solve’ the problem of diversity ... rooted within the culture and structure, ... which is inherently defined by and functions according to a white, unrepresentative worldview.”

So what can be done?

No-one pretends that overturning racism that is woven invisibly into the social consciousness as normal and thereby implicating the western world of complicity in a global racist conspiracy to persecute those hailing from elsewhere is a realistic business plan. However, if we are to end racism and close the attainment gap, we must recruit and promote more black academics and women, rebalance our collections, our teaching and our public discourse.

The most dangerous norm until recently was that very few people would acknowledge that there was a problem, or if there was that it was serious, endemic and so deeply rooted that it could survive a well-intentioned strategic initiative. Yet it has been found that engagement policies often serve to further burden minorities while relieving those in power of the responsibility of dismantling the systems of oppression, leading to the argument that “the master’s tools will never dismantle the master’s house” (Lorde, 2018).

Real change is difficult and dangerous in an endemically racist society; the powerful diversity industry is working hard to magnify critical calls for revolutionary change. Even as attempts are made to find acceptable ways for organisations to turn their existing approaches to decolonisation, there remains a risk that traditional politically and financially accepted strategic business processes may not be capable of achieving the

revolutionary change needed to re-establish academia on a more egalitarian knowledge base and reconceive its teaching and library collections to match. Such change would be uncomfortably expensive, disruptive, and would likely call into question much established scholarly opinion. In short, it is fundamentally unwelcome. It allows the status quo to sustain itself, encourages incremental, marginal change to be substituted for radical upheaval, and ultimately protects the established status quo. It is only natural that people are unwilling to dismantle the systems of privilege, understanding and power that raised and maintain them. Organisations naturally favour a more incremental approach but this risks both the purpose becoming confused over time and the change watered down, resulting in a more neutral and politically safe approach to integrating some more diverse materials on the side of the existing canon rather than taking a fresh, balanced look at the world's knowledge and reconsidering all the big questions in light of this (Chaudhury, 2019). If change takes too long to happen, further generations of disadvantaged minorities will grow up before we achieve any meaningful change.

Decolonisation as strategic organisational change

Everything from annual performance and development review (PDR) objectives to funding is justified in terms of alignment to organisational strategy, and so it is essential to get buy-in from the top. Getting the Vice-Chancellor or CEO on board is particularly important because upwardly mobile members of staff will be looking to attend to the priorities their leader has set. It is then up to the rest of us to use the strategy as permission to join together and create a coordinated push towards a steadily more radical transformation using the machinery of the organisation in a coordinated fashion to effect radical change. Even an essentially unambitious, incremental strategy can thereby act as license for transformative change because it confirms a business need and therefore sanctions the allocation of the resources required to make change happen (McCalman, Paton, & Sieber, 2016, p. 273).

We should also help our leaders to understand how they can embody the change and make the decisions now that a fully decolonised organisation would take, fully embracing BAME talent and knowledge. Essentially, we need to make it easier for our leaders to stop talking about and planning for decolonising and start *doing* it.

We should start with cultural change, for where culture leads, everything else follows. 76% of change leaders fail to address culture (Aguirre & Alpern, 2014), and yet only if hearts and minds are won is it possible to overcome cultural resistance: the instinctual reluctance to change, the comfort the privileged majority have to retain the status quo in order to conserve effort and focus on tasks and changes that are important to them. Informal ways of working and the unwritten office motto all serve as powerful guides to behaviour. Persuade teams to change these, and you will be well on the way to reshaping the way the organisation thinks and works.

Getting effective buy-in requires an emotionally engaging message and change narrative, and not just dry strategies with SMART objectives (Aguirre & Alpern, 2014). Once top level buy-in is secured, it is necessary to get emotional and strategic level buy-in at every other level of the organisation to get things moving because without enthusiasm from below, only those narrow things that are measured are likely to be delivered.

This requires leaders from as high a level as is available to spend time in open and frank discussions with managers below them, right down to the front-line lecturers and supervisors to gain their input. This ensures that everyone feels involved, valued and consulted, increasing buy-in, and allows senior leaders to understand and help overcome practical hurdles before they become barriers to change.

Most organisational change ends up being incremental and reactive (By, 2005). The danger is that meaningful change might take so long to happen that the change has no impact for generations. We must think big, even if we must pursue change in small steps. What is important is to ensure everyone has the resources and opportunities to develop themselves through the change activities and engage in challenging and exciting work relevant both to their roles and the wider organisation (Margulies & Raya, 1972 cited by McCalman et al., 2016, p. 233).

Once you have this, every layer below the top has to identify and work to solve the challenges at their level, from senior academics encouraging and facilitating BAME voices in the literature to librarians encouraging inclusion of BAME authors in reading lists, supplier collection development/automated procurement programmes, and lower level library managers in promoting this stock in creative and innovative, attention-grabbing ways, focusing on how the stock can be used by everyone to explore minority interests, concerns and affirmative stories.

Speaking of messages, it is an often-overlooked fact that most leaders assume that a clear strategic message will be read and understood from the outset (Aguirre & Alpern, 2014). People vary in their receptiveness to different communication channels, and so strategic messages need not only to be persuasive but repeated in different ways, at different times and through a mix of different media in order to reach all audiences effectively. Brief videos, newsletter posts, meetings and presentations, and so on all help disseminate and reinforce key messages. Getting the communications channel mix right is important to making sure everyone understands and has the chance to be on the same page!

Getting these messages out in a believable and successful way is a political art in itself. For this, you must engage and bring onside the 3% of your organisation's workforce who can influence 85% of staff because they know everyone who matters, are known, liked, respected at all levels, and can therefore act as either gatekeepers or disseminators of information (Haley, 2013). If you can identify these people, get them on board, recruit them to your project board and get them to endorse your ideas, getting a grass roots movement going and achieving eventual success becomes much more likely.

An accepted, common but often fatal mistake in change management is to declare victory too early (Kotter, 2012; Aguirre & Alpern, 2014). Change is a process, not a destination. Some things will inevitably work well while others lag behind at any stage of a change project. It is important to celebrate quick wins and other successes and mindfully bring everyone together to carry out a root cause analysis to uncover the nature of barriers and other challenges. In this process, it is important to avoid the blame game because anyone who feels threatened will immediately seek to muddy otherwise clear waters and seek allies to protect themselves, introducing avoidable political complications in what is already an intrinsically political change process (McCalman, Paton, & Sieber, 2016, p. 273).

Creating library level change

Decolonisation has started but it needs us all to take ownership and responsibility for pursuing it with the urgency it so desperately needs. As we explore our organisational role from the perspective of the out-groups that statistics suggest use our services less and are at greater risk of dropping out, we may have to accept that the services we have striven so hard to make egalitarian and equitable may well be cis-heteronormative white European hegemonies, and that we have only failed to see this because we have grown up among such systems and have been acculturated to see them as normal and acceptable. As a result, we may not have had the impact on minority groups that we intended.

As has been discussed, there is much that library leaders and faculty librarians can engage with at an organisational level, but what can be done at the level of the 'average library manager'? We can educate ourselves about the lived experiences and challenges facing minority groups and the challenges they encounter in daily life. We can engage with critical user experience studies, taking care to ensure a light touch approach to minimise the added burden we place on those educating the system that is quite possibly oppressing them. We can be prepared to listen uncritically to uncomfortable truths and observations, reflect, learn, and change ourselves and our services in response.

Summary

- Academia has inherited a system of scholarship that is patriarchal, colonial, and exclusive. It is the last acceptable face of sexism and racism and normalises the presence of both in mainstream society. To right the system and balance the syllabus and the body of literature on which it rests, nothing less than revolutionary change in scholarship and academic librarianship is required.
- BAME students and staff find themselves subject to racism, lack role models and find the scholarly literature bereft of contributions from outside the white, male western canon. They are offered little, if anything, to which they can relate. Both have been identified as reasons for the BAME attainment gap in higher education.
- Everyone must work together and invest heavily in making good this long-standing prejudice. Real change is expensive, difficult, and dangerous, and real efforts have been made to transform this unpalatable process into a familiar strategic commitment that can be easily weakened and forgotten over time. It is a testament to the all-pervasive and self-erasing nature of endemic discrimination that it can erase its passage even as it smothers revolution in its infancy.
- Everyone at all levels of the organisation needs to work together to realise a revolutionary change in the way universities work. We have talked long enough, now we need to embody the change at all levels.
- Library staff at all levels have an important role to play in decolonising library collections and services and in engaging in critical user experience studies and reflexive praxis to develop services and attitudes that are perceived as increasingly welcoming and engaging to clients from minority ethnic and social groups.

References

- Aguirre, D., & Alpern, M. (2014). 10 Principles of Leading Change Management. *Strategy + Business*, 75. Retrieved from <https://www.strategy-business.com/article/00255>
- By, R. T. (2005). Organisational change management: A critical review. *Journal of Change Management*, 5(4), 369-380. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14697010500359250>
- Chaudhuri, A. (2016, March 16). The long read: The real meaning of Rhodes must fall. *The Guardian*. Retrieved from <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2016/mar/16/the-real-meaning-of-rhodes-must-fall>
- Decolonisation not a commodity. (March 12, 2019). *The Herald (South Africa)*. Retrieved from <https://advance.lexis.com/document/>
- Decolonise UKC: Through the kaleidoscope*. Retrieved from <https://decoloniseukc.org/>
- Di Angelo, R. (2011). White fragility. *The International Journal of Critical Pedagogy*, 3(3), 54–70. Retrieved from <http://libjournal.uncg.edu/ijcp/article/view/249>
- Dykes, F. B., Postings, T., Kopp, B., & Crouch, A. (2017). *Counselling skills and studies* (2nd ed.). London: Sage.
- Gohr, M. (2017). Ethnic and racial diversity in libraries: How white allies can support arguments for decolonization. *Journal of Radical Librarianship*, 3, 42-58. Retrieved from <https://journal.radicalibrarianship.org/index.php/journal/article/view/5/33>
- Haley, B. A. (2013). Talent: 3 percent of employees can make or break any corporate change. *Houston Business Journal*. Retrieved from <https://www.bizjournals.com/houston/blog/2014/05/talent-3-percent-of-employees-can-make-or-break.html>
- Kotter, J. P. (2012). *Leading change*. Boston: Harvard Business Review Press.
- Lorde, A. (2018). *The master's tools will never dismantle the master's house*. London: Penguin Modern.
- McCalman, J., Paton, R. A., & Sieber, S. (2016). *Change Management: A guide to effective implementation* (4th ed.). Los Angeles: Sage.
- Turner, C. (October 25, 2017). Cambridge University 'decolonisation' row spreads to host of other courses. *The Telegraph*. Retrieved from <https://advance.lexis.com/>
- Universities UK. (2019). *Black, Asian and minority ethnic student attainment at UK universities: #closingthegap*. Retrieved from <https://www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/policy-and-analysis/reports/Documents/2019/bame-student-attainment-uk-universities-closing-the-gap.pdf>

Acknowledgements

I would like to acknowledge a great intellectual and moral debt to all the speakers at the CILIP International Libraries and Information Group (ILIG) conference on *Decolonising library collections and practices* held at Cardiff Metropolitan University on 25 November 2019. Without their insight and teaching, this article would not have been possible.

Disclaimer

While the University of Portsmouth takes decolonisation seriously and is taking active steps to make its library collections and curricula more inclusive and representative of a wider range of authors who are women and/or representative of different ethnic and cultural perspectives, the following post remains the personal opinion of the post author and does not necessarily reflect the views of the University.

Supporting lecturers to diversify their reading lists: the Broaden my Bookshelf Reading List Toolkit

Kate McGuinn, Subject Librarian, University of Huddersfield.

Background

The University of Huddersfield Library launched its Broaden my Bookshelf initiative in October 2018 with the aim of diversifying its collection. The initiative came about as a result of a collaboration between the Library and the Students Union and BAME Ambassadors, and a shared desire to reflect Huddersfield's diverse student body in its Library collection. We took the decision initially to focus on improving the collection in the area of BAME scholarship and then increased our scope to include material by and about the LGBT+ community from February 2019 onwards. The basic idea behind Broaden my Bookshelf is to encourage students and staff to suggest relevant books for us to buy for the Library and we have used a variety of events to promote this agenda. I have already written about the first year of Broaden my Bookshelf in this journal (McGuinn, 2020).

Focus on reading lists

In October 2019, the Library and SU Officers undertook a series of outreach events in the seven Schools of the University. We wanted to hear what students thought about diversity in their curriculum. In particular, those of us in the Library wanted to get feedback from students about the effect Broaden my Bookshelf was having on their reading, one year on from its launch. One of the questions we asked was about reading lists, whether students had seen any increase in the diversity of resources being added to their lists. The answers we received were not encouraging.

In the spring of 2020, the Students Union and BAME Ambassadors undertook a reading list audit of sample reading lists across all seven Schools, looking at the gender and ethnicity of authors. This revealed that on average, only 4.73% of the items on Huddersfield reading lists were written by BAME authors. The average figure for white authors was just over 80%, with 15.26% of authors being classified as ethnicity unknown. This quantitative data, added to the qualitative data gathered from the outreach events, pointed to a real need to shift our focus towards lecturers and begin the job of supporting and encouraging them to include books from our diversified collection in their reading lists.

We knew that we were not alone in having to tackle this issue. Research undertaken at University College London found “empirical basis for concerns that university curricula are dominated by white, male and Eurocentric authors” (Schucan Bird & Pitman, 2020, p.903). An analysis of reading lists at institutions in UK, Ghana, South Africa and Sudan undertaken last year at the London School of Economics similarly revealed a huge bias across all institutions (including the African ones) towards writers from the Global North (London School of Economics, 2019).

The conference that never happened

The Broaden my Bookshelf team (Alison Sharman, Laura Williams and myself) began discussing what we could do to address this issue. Our initial plan in the spring of 2020 was to launch our promotional activities to lecturers with a workshop at the Teaching and Learning Conference, an annual event at Huddersfield which takes place in June each year. Then the COVID-19 pandemic and consequent lockdown resulted in the conference being cancelled. For a while, along with librarians across the world, we turned our focus to moving our own core student support activities online, but when the dust began to settle in the early summer of 2020, we picked up the idea again and decided to begin building an online resource. With this Toolkit, as it came to be called, we hoped to achieve our aim of supporting lecturers to introduce some much needed diversity into the reading they recommend to students.

Toolkit platform, structure and content

We realised that we needed to put together a resource as quickly as possible, in order to provide support to lecturers during the summer vacation when most of them update their reading lists. For this reason, we decided to use Libguides as our platform. It was already in place so we had experience of using it. Additionally, we knew that as we already had support content available in Libguides, it was a format which was familiar to lecturers, so using it would make it easier to promote the Toolkit to them and increase the likelihood of it being adopted.

We spent a long time discussing the structure of the Toolkit because we knew that we would need to incorporate quite a high volume of content. We also wanted to use the Toolkit to explain about the decolonisation agenda and present lecturers with evidence of the importance of decolonising their reading lists. In the end, we decided to break the content down into five sections, each of which would have its own tab on the Libguide.

I am only able to give a brief description of the content here, but the Toolkit is publicly available to view (University of Huddersfield, n.d.). The first section, entitled “About the Toolkit” provides an introduction and a hyperlinked contents page to give ease of access to the other sections of the guide. It also features a widget (designed by our colleague Andrew Strike) which showcases books purchased as a result of Broaden my Bookshelf.

The section entitled “Why diversify my reading lists?” gave us the opportunity to persuade lecturers of the importance of the decolonising agenda and includes quotes and a short video from BAME staff and students. “How diverse are my reading lists?” is a checklist which we hope lecturers will use to assess their lists and see where they need to make changes. “How do I get started?” gives advice and links to further resources, including websites, blogs and other library catalogues, including some belonging to universities in the Global South. We grouped books in “Broaden my Bookshelf Book Collections” by subject area for ease of use. We wanted to make sure that the Toolkit wasn’t just about books though, so we included guidance about locating diverse journal, web, film and podcast resources.

We launched the Toolkit in late July 2020 and promoted it to lecturers by email, on our web pages, on social media and through our monthly Library Newsletter. Coincidentally,

we launched the Toolkit a couple of days before the publication of the Higher Education Policy Institute Debate Paper on decolonising curricula (Liyanage, 2020) which may have helped to fuel interest in it.

Evaluation

No formal evaluation of the Toolkit has yet taken place. It is too early as yet to do this and we are planning to do it in the summer of 2021. Anecdotally though, feedback from lecturers has been mainly very positive. A typical comment received from lecturers at the time of the launch was “This looks great!” One lecturer in Applied Sciences mentioned that it doesn’t feature enough book resources in their area, so this is a part of the collection we are looking to develop. In terms of quantitative data, the Libguides statistics show that the Toolkit has been well used, with 2311 individual views in the five months since it was launched. Interest in the Toolkit peaked in September when 1029 views were recorded, but it was maintained throughout the autumn with 324 views recorded in October and 258 in November. It will be interesting to see in the future whether this interest translates into diversified reading lists.

We are pleased that the Toolkit has been well received by our SU Officers. Our Equalities Officer Nurin Quresma said, “The toolkit is great for all academics and students as well. It is a start to ensure that academics are held accountable for making their reading lists more diverse and inclusive.” This was echoed by the SU Education Officer Tom Rolls, who stated, “This is a fantastic toolkit that brings together all of the essential information when it comes to tackling the attainment gap. Not only does it pull together the tools, but also states why this is important, which is crucial as we work to improve our institutions and support all students. This resource is so useful I have sent it to other institutions as an exemplary example that they are trying to implement themselves.”

Conclusion

There is no doubt that the tragic death of George Floyd and the resulting protests in support of the Black Lives Matters movement in the summer of 2020 has caused a renewed interest in decolonising curricula in British universities, but actual change is slow to happen. We recognise that, in common with many universities, not just in Britain but elsewhere too, our reading lists are currently failing to represent the diverse student body we are fortunate to have, and that this must change. We are pleased to be able to do a small thing to help this important change take place. We will continue to develop and promote the Reading List Toolkit in tandem with our growing collection of diverse library resources.

References

- Liyanage, M. (2020). *Miseducation: decolonising curricula, culture and pedagogy in UK universities*. (Higher Education Policy Institute Debate Paper 23). https://www.hepi.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/HEPI_Miseducation_Debate-Paper-23_FINAL.pdf
- London School of Economics. (2019, March 12). *How diverse is your reading list? (Probably not very...)* <https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/africaatlse/2019/03/12/how-diverse-is-your-reading-list-probably-not-very/>

McGuinn, K. (2020). Broaden my Bookshelf: working with the University of Huddersfield SU to tackle the attainment gap. *ALISS Quarterly*, 15 (2), 3-5. <http://eprints.hud.ac.uk/id/eprint/35167/>

Schucan Bird, K., & Pitman, L. (2020). How diverse is your reading list? Exploring issues of representation and decolonisation in the UK. *Higher Education*, (79), 903-920. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1007/s10734-019-00446-9>

University of Huddersfield. (n.d.). *Reading List Toolkit (Broaden My Bookshelf)*. <https://hud.libguides.com/broadenmybookshelf>

PROOF

Taking the stress out of lockdown: access without compromise

Lisa Anderson, Library Service Manager, University of Northampton.

Masniza Sore, University of Northampton.

Library and Learning Services (LLS) at University of Northampton (UoN) were prepared for lockdown. UoN's strategic plan of Transforming Lives + Inspiring Change (University of Northampton, 2020) has been preparing inadvertently for a lockdown situation by digitally skilling up staff and students for Active Blended Learning and providing new students with a laptop.

Service Development had spent a year preparing the LLS web sites to be accessible, thorough and super supportive and saw a usage jump through the year.

The Discovery team eased into lockdown by requesting our suppliers to hold the delivery of print resources. Working from home has enabled the team to focus on learning new skills to audit our third-party content databases for accessibility.

We will be discussing how both teams have been working together on ensuring the services are ready for the WCAG (*Web Content Accessibility Guidelines 2.1*, Accessibility Guidelines Working Group, 2018) through the PSBAR (The Public Sector Bodies (Websites and Mobile Applications) Accessibility Regulations, 2018) and responding to lockdown, by ensuring all correspondence, web presences and resources are accessible to all.

This paper is based on a presentation given at the Northern Collaboration Conference 2020 (Anderson and Sore, 2020).

LLS web presence and Service Development

We have been working on the LLS portal and FAQ system, in light of the WCAG. Like all of you, we pretty much immediately had to take all our services online. I had already been working on a project to make sure our portal and FAQ system would meet the WCAG deadline in September 2020. We wanted something that was quick to load, mobile first and flexible. As details came available about what the WCAG would involve, the decision was made to completely overhaul the portal as it would have been just as time consuming to revisit all the existing content and make it accessible. I created the templates, layout and code to all be as accessible as possible and this proved much simpler than shoehorning it into a non-compliant system.

We decided to simplify the home page, to make it colourful and attractive but without the colours being a necessary part. We removed all but the most essential images to make it quick to load on a mobile except for a header image. All the pages, and indeed all the distinct systems, largely have the same look and layout so it was quick to learn how to find information and are seamless to move between.

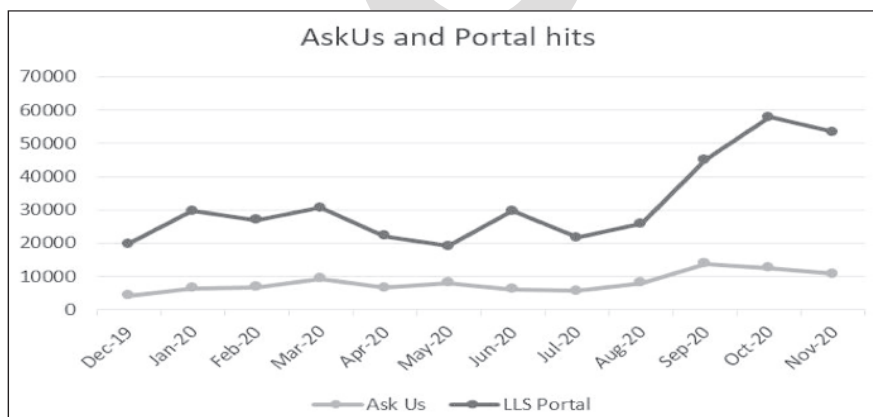
There was no need to reinvent the wheel. This meant informal but informative content that is quick to scan and find the relevant information, that is low on jargon. There are friendly URLs and nothing unexpected will happen by searching or moving between pages as we use familiar layouts and predictable navigation.

Mas and I are lucky, we hear a lot about 'institutional buy in' and the battleground that can be there when 'encouraging' staff to meet a legal obligation. I can honestly say that this was not the case for us. Our immediate LLS management were happy for us and our teams to spend the time we needed to be confident and competent to make decisions that directly affect students and staff. And we were more ready for lockdown than most: UoN had already been gifting laptops to year one undergraduates and this helped massively when planning for lockdown with only days' notice.

Our students were already familiar with online learning through the University's Active Blended Learning: a combination of small groups, active learning on and off campus, in real-time sessions with activities students can undertake where they like and at the time they choose. Learning Technology and Staff Development were already training students and staff with digital literacy skills. UoN have a strategic plan Transforming Lives and Inspiring Change that fits in with LLS and how things are approached. The three threads are being Future Focussed, Super Supportive and having Social Impact. This allowed us to think forward and plan for an eventuality that felt impossible to plan for.

As many notices, pages and FAQs were being made, we also created an Accessibility set of guides to make sure that our output was as accessible as possible. This is a publicly available guide (Library and Learning Services, 2020) but it is aimed at staff who add content to the portal and Ask Us.

We saw a marked increase in use of our portal and FAQ system this year, as I'm sure all of you have too. We had 395,731 views of our 220 pages this year- over 300,000 since lockdown. We had over 20,000 Service Development enquiries and nearly 100,000 enquiries in total this year too in our FAQ system Ask Us.



Ask Us, with very little promotion, is gaining traction with students and staff as being an easy to use system that is reliable in every sense of the word. We hope to encourage and enable other teams and services to also add entries whilst still making sure it is fully accessible and the tone remains super supportive.

Discovery and Accessibility

Lisa and I are lucky to be part of the UoN Accessibility Sub-committee group to represent our teams within the LLS services. The Discovery team's accessibility journey began after I attended the group meeting.

There are six of us in the team with the skills set, knowledge and experience to process and catalogue print, ebooks and journals – the typical library tasks to ensure that the library resources are discoverable by our patrons. We also subscribe to third-party content databases to enrich our electronic resources. These are discoverable via our A-Z databases webpage.

We have no previous experience auditing accessibility functionalities.

The PSBAR came into force on the 23 September 2018, which requires public sector organisations to ensure that their websites and contents are digitally accessible alongside any third-party content (Government Digital Service, 2018).

To comply with the regulations, we needed to ensure that our websites and content alongside the third-party content are digitally accessible.

Just because we did not create this content that does not mean we can escape the Regulations. But what influence do we have to make them accessible? We cannot change or fix the content and layout of the webpages! However, we do have a responsibility to our patrons to ensure that our services do not exclude anyone. Potentially, the audit results can be used to encourage our suppliers to comply with the regulations.

Because the A-Z webpage and its content existed before September 2018, we needed to ensure that the content conform to the requirements by the 23rd September 2020.

We did the audit process in stages. The third-party databases were allocated between the team members to collate information which would include an accessibility statement and accessibility features if any.

Once the information had been collated, we then started to audit the functionalities as outlined in WCAG 2.1. The guideline covers the design of a webpage which includes font, colour, contrast, keyboard input and tab ordering (W3C, 2018). We thanked our colleagues from Library Services at Open University (2020) who shared their accessibility checklist to help us with our auditing tasks, which was amended slightly to reflect our local practices.

Keyboard				
Basic search: Keyboard				
Test page	Test	Achieved?	Comments	Impact*
	Can you tab into the search box and enter search terms? WCAG 2.1.1	Choose an item.		Choose an item.
	Can you perform a search by pressing ENTER? WCAG 2.1.1	Choose an item.		Choose an item.
	Can you perform a search by tabbing to the search button and pressing ENTER? WCAG 2.1.1	Choose an item.		Choose an item.
	Can you access and apply any search filters? WCAG 2.1.1	Choose an item.		Choose an item.
	Can you tab to and access the Advanced Search option? WCAG 2.1.1	Choose an item.		Choose an item.

* **High Impact.** Users will be unable to perform important system tasks or unable to understand important content if this item is left not repaired.
Medium Impact. Users will be able to perform important system task with some level of difficulty or will be able to understand important content with difficulty if this item is left not repaired.
Low Impact. Users will be inconvenienced by leaving this item not repaired, but will be able to accomplish all tasks.

We performed 121 audits on 176 databases, as some shared a common publishing platform to gauge the level of accessibility and their conformity to the regulations. They were to be audited on 4 different web browsers – Chrome, Edge, IE and Firefox and complete a separate form for each browser.

COVID-19 Lockdown

UoN went into lockdown on the 23rd of March 2020 when we were each given a laptop with all relevant systems installed and setup so we could work from home, without compromising access to our Library services for our patrons.

At UoN we already have an e-first policy and more than 80% of our resources are available electronically. We stopped print book deliveries and orders a week before the lockdown. We are prepared when the lockdown happened, just not prepared that it is going to be this long!

Now the service is focussing 100% on electronic resources, sourcing alternatives for our print textbooks. This has enabled us to re-focus on our accessibility audit, as the deadline was looming upon us; alongside our daily tasks - checking and sourcing alternative suppliers for our mandatory print textbooks to enable teaching and learning to take place remotely.

A daily group chat was setup to support each other via Jabber, which is one of our communication tools in-use at UoN. We used this channel to ask questions with regards of the checklist and audit procedures.

We have weekly team meetings where accessibility is the main agenda to discuss any concerns, challenges and alternatives to improve our procedures, so we could meet the deadline.

As a result of our daily communication, we have made some changes to our audit procedures. We were to audit on two browsers only instead of four - Chrome and Edge; and only completed one form instead of two separate forms. We will review and revise our procedures accordingly for the second phase of the project after the 23rd September 2020.

Keyboard					
Basic search: Keyboard					
Test page	Test	Achieved?	Comments Chrome	Comments Edge	Impact*
	Can you tab into the search box and enter search terms? WCAG 2.1.1	Choose an item.			Choose an item.
	Can you perform a search by pressing ENTER? WCAG 2.1.1	Choose an item.			Choose an item.
	Can you perform a search by tabbing to the search button and pressing ENTER? WCAG 2.1.1	Choose an item.			Choose an item.
	Can you access and apply any search filters? WCAG 2.1.1	Choose an item.			Choose an item.
	Can you tab to and access the Advanced Search option? WCAG 2.1.1	Choose an item.			Choose an item.

* **High Impact.** Users will be unable to perform important system tasks or unable to understand important content if this item is left not repaired.
Medium Impact. Users will be able to perform important system task with some level of difficulty or will be able to understand important content with difficulty if this item is left not repaired.
Low Impact. Users will be inconvenienced by leaving this item not repaired, but will be able to accomplish all tasks.
 #

To encourage and support each other we shared best practice on how we approached each database and the audit tasks as each database presents their content differently. The main challenge was for us to be confident that if the database does not conform to the checklist it is because they have not reached the level required not because we were doing it wrong.

Did we meet the deadline? Yes, we have linked each database to its own accessibility statement if they have one and this was reflected on our own accessibility statement. So, phase 1 accomplished!

Conclusion

Covid-19 and lockdown have given us the opportunity to focus on our accessibility tasks and presented us with its own challenges. We were able to overcome these challenges by working together as one LLS team with good communication and teamwork; to achieve one common goal – access for all without compromise.

Ensuring the new design for our portal is accessible for all with easy to use and navigate menus and content; and our third-party contents are compliant with the Accessibility Guidelines.

We wanted to ensure that our library services reflecting the University Strategic Plan – being super supportive, future focussed and have a social impact for our teaching and learning community to thrive in whatever challenges presented to us.

Our accessibility journey does not stop here, we are continuing our path to ensure that all our patrons have equal access to the required content as and when they need it. Accessibility is for everyone regardless of their ability.

References:

- Anderson, L., & Sore, M. (2020, November 18–19). *Taking the stress out of lockdown: Access without compromise* [Paper Presentation]. Northern Collaboration, Online, United Kingdom. https://northampton.mediaspace.kaltura.com/playlist/dedicated/1_ycm9bk92/
- Government Digital Service. (2018, May 9). *Guidance: understanding accessibility requirements for public sector bodies*. GOV.UK. <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/accessibility-requirements-for-public-sector-websites-and-apps#meeting-accessibility-requirements>
- Library and Learning Services. (2020, August 1). *LLS Home: Accessibility group home page: Home*. Library and Learning Service, University of Northampton. <https://libguides.northampton.ac.uk/accessibility>
- Library Services. (2020). *Databases with accessibility issues*. The Open University <https://www.open.ac.uk/library/help-and-support/databases-accessibility-issues>
- University of Northampton. (2017, November). *Transforming Lives + Inspiring Change*. <https://www.northampton.ac.uk/about-us/governance-and-management/office-of-the-vice-chancellor/transforming-lives-inspiring-change/>
- Queen's Printer of Acts of Parliament. (2018). *The Public Sector Bodies (Websites and Mobile Applications) Accessibility Regulations 2018*. Legislation.Gov.Uk. <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2018/852/contents/made>
- W3C. (2018, Jun 5). *Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.1*. <https://www.w3.org/TR/2018/REC-WCAG21-20180605/>

Making the Library's Information and Digital Literacy tutorials accessible and inclusive

Sara Needham: Digital Resource Co-creator, The University of Sheffield.

Jo Marsden: Assistive Technology Officer, The University of Sheffield.

Introduction

Here at the University of Sheffield we have been working to improve the accessibility of our tutorials available to students to assist them with their studies. The work was carried out by the Library's Digital Resource Co-creators. To ensure the resources were accessible when using assistive software, there was collaboration with the Library's Assistive Technology Officer. This paper highlights the work undertaken and the challenges encountered.

Tutorial Formats

Our Information and Digital Literacy tutorials are created in three different formats using different types of software. The format depends on the content of the tutorial, so we use either Camtasia screencasting software, accordion-style web pages, or Articulate Storyline 2 interactive animated software.

Camtasia

Camtasia is a screencasting software we use for short tutorials which show how to use specific academic databases such as Scopus or Web of Science, or software such as Google Sites. They give a basic introduction to the subject and are just a few minutes long, which helps to maintain the viewers' attention and reduce information overload. All the existing Camtasia videos had to be remade with voiceovers, closed captioning and transcripts to fulfil WCAG 2.1 accessibility requirements.

Comparing old and new versions of a video



Figure 1
Screenshot of the original 2017 version of the "Using Scopus" tutorial video.

Note. Call-outs (speech bubbles) are used to describe how to access and use the database.

Figure 1 shows how the original version of the "Using Scopus" tutorial uses "call-outs" (speech bubbles) to explain all the steps on screen. It was created without audio-visual accessibility features such as a voiceover, closed captions or a transcript.



Figure 2
Screenshot of the current 2020 version of the “Using Scopus” tutorial video.

Note. This version has a voiceover, closed captions and a transcript of the voiceover.

Figure 2 shows the new version of the “Using Scopus” tutorial (University of Sheffield, 2020a), uploaded in the Kaltura video platform. It has a scripted voiceover which can be muted, closed captioning which can be switched on or off, and a transcript of the voiceover which can be shown or hidden. It can also be viewed in full screen without the transcript. Minimal amounts of call-outs are used to emphasise important steps, but they are much less obtrusive than in the old version.

Comparing these shows how the videos have developed to encompass accessibility requirements. Our process of creating videos has changed in that originally we would write out a step-by-step list of what we wanted to show and create the video from that, but we now begin by writing a script, followed by recording the voiceover from the script, then the video is created around the voiceover. The script document can be uploaded in the Kaltura video platform and it will automatically align the captioning and create the transcript, which is useful as all the accessibility features can be added easily in one place.

Referencing

All the Referencing tutorials (University of Sheffield, n.d.-a) are text-based and created as accordion-style web pages; each tutorial page shows only the section headings which drop down when clicked to reveal the content, then clicked to close back up. They are in a text-based format because there is a large amount of information in each different referencing guide, and there are a number of different referencing styles used by different departments, so they are not suitable to be made into a generic video as it would be far too long and complicated.

These may not be accessible or inclusive for everyone, so we created accessible PDF versions. There are links to the accessible PDFs both on the Referencing tutorial home page and within each tutorial.

As a team, we co-wrote a guidance document to follow when creating the accessible Word documents which are then converted to the PDFs. Heading styles and alt text for images were applied; tables were converted to text; jump links back to the Contents list were created at the end of each section; and hyperlinks changed to descriptive text rather than URLs so a screen reader can read them.

Because referencing has to be done in a specific format, e.g. the title of a book may have to be italicised or journal numbers may have to be in bold, we created these formats as a

style, using Strong for bold and Emphasis for italics, and added them to the Styles toolbar in the Word templates so they would be readable to screen readers.

We realised that using descriptive hyperlink text could be a problem for someone who has printed out a PDF as they won't have any idea of where the link goes to, so we put the full URLs in a separate section at the end of each document.

Storyline

Storyline software is used for longer animated and interactive tutorials that the user has to click through and interact with. These give more in-depth information and guidance on study skills, such as the example in Figure 3, “Developing a search strategy” (University of Sheffield, 2020b), and can contain interactive quizzes. Because of the animation and interactivity they may not be suitable for everyone to use. We did already provide alternative PDF versions of the content, but these had to be recreated and reformatted with accessible features, such as headings styles, alt text for images, and descriptive hyperlinks.

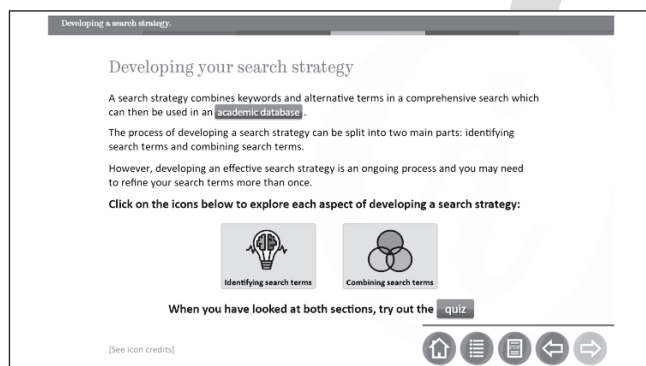


Figure 3
Screenshot of the “Developing a search strategy” tutorial.

Note. Storyline tutorials contain interactive elements, e.g. action buttons and animated icons.

Previously the PDF was only available via the button from within the tutorial, but we also added a direct link from the “Discovering” tutorials home page (University of Sheffield, n.d.-b) so that users who would find it easier to open the PDF without having to go into the tutorial can access it there.

We created a similar template to the one we co-wrote for the Referencing PDFs. The main content formatting is the same but we also added alt text to any images as these tutorials contain some of the images from the tutorial, rather than being wholly text-based like the Referencing PDFs.

We are planning to phase out the use of Storyline due to its limited accessibility and use Xerte instead for the interactive tutorials. Xerte is browser-based software and the accessibility features of the browser can be used when viewing it.

Challenges

Meeting the deadline

All the updating of existing resources for accessibility and inclusivity was done alongside

our usual workloads, so it was quite a challenge to complete it all by the September 23rd deadline for WCAG 2.1 compliance. We also had to coordinate it whilst working from home during lockdown, but we did get it all done successfully. As a team we collaborated using Google Docs, Google Chat and Google Meet which has worked really well, particularly in the process of creating the templates for the PDFs as we could discuss aspects of what we needed to consider and incorporate it in real time.

Learning how to make resources accessible

We researched accessibility features and developed our knowledge using websites such as the WCAG 2.1, WebAIM and AbilityNet, and have attended accessibility training webinars.

Feedback

We have Library contact details at the end of the tutorials so students can send us feedback by contacting the Library's Virtual Advisory Help Service via chat, email or phone. They can also provide feedback via the Inclusive Learning web page (<https://www.sheffield.ac.uk/library/inclusivelearning>). It would be really useful to have feedback specifically from registered students with disabilities, so they can tell us whether the accessibility features incorporated into the tutorials work well in practice or whether we can make improvements. Currently, this is something that is being looked into in collaboration with the University's Disability and Dyslexia Support Service (DDSS).

Useful links

AbilityNet: <https://abilitynet.org.uk/>

WebAIM: <https://webaim.org/>

Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.1: <https://www.w3.org/TR/WCAG20/>

Xerte: <https://xerte.org.uk/>

References

The University of Sheffield. (n.d.-a). *Referencing*. Retrieved December 14, 2020, from <https://www.sheffield.ac.uk/library/idlt/referencing>

The University of Sheffield. (n.d.-b). *Discovering*. Retrieved December 14, 2020, from <https://www.sheffield.ac.uk/library/idlt/discovering>

The University of Sheffield. (2020a). *Using Scopus*. Kaltura Digital Media Hub. Retrieved December 14, 2020, from https://digitalmedia.sheffield.ac.uk/media/Using+Scopus/1_h1sx7drj

The University of Sheffield. (2020b). *Developing a search strategy*. Retrieved December 14, 2020, from https://librarydevelopment.group.shef.ac.uk/storyline/discovering/developing-search-strategy/story_html5.html

Disability- Higher Education, Libraries, Teaching and Learning. Bibliography – Nov/ December 2020

Teaching and Learning

Chugani, C D.; Houtrow, A. (2020)

Effect of the COVID-19 pandemic on college students with disabilities.

American Journal of Public Health, 110(12), 1722-1723. DOI: 10.2105/AJPH.2020.305983.

Dangoisse, F; Clercq, M. De; Meenen, F. Van; Chartier, Laurie; Frédéric, N. (2020)

When disability becomes ability to navigate the transition to higher education

European Journal of Special Needs Education 35(4), 513-528

Abstract: Students with disabilities are enrolling increasingly in higher education (HE).

Yet little is known about the specific challenges they have to overcome in order to navigate this transition. This qualitative study tried to ascertain the transition-related needs of students with disabilities by comparing their experiences with those of students without disabilities. Two focus groups were formed, respectively composed of five special needs students and five traditional ones. Semi-structured interviews were analysed through interpretative phenomenological analyses. Five super-ordinate themes emerged from the data: the transition as a roller coaster, taming a new freedom, discovering oneself, overcoming obstacles and perceiving university as a supportive or a threatening environment. Similarities and differences were observed among the two groups that mainly showed that students with disabilities clearly enhanced their experience at university and expressed more positive emotions than traditional students did. In a way, it appeared that the lifetime management of their disabilities better prepared them to face the challenges of the transition to HE. These findings were discussed with regard to transition theories and led to some recommendations

Golan, M.; Singer, G.; Rabin, N.; Kleper, D. (2020)

Integrating actual time usage into the assessment of examination time extensions provided to disabled college engineering students

Assessment & Evaluation In Higher Education 45 (7), 988-1000

Abstract: In this study, we suggest combining the monitoring of actual examination time used with grades in order to assess examination time extensions in terms of access provision and expected outcome. Using naturally-occurring data collected from a large sample (N = 2315) of undergraduate engineering students, we argue that extended examination time may be regarded as providing equal access when a disabled student actually utilizes more examination time than a normally achieving student, regardless of the grade obtained. We further argue that extended examination time may be regarded as resulting in the expected outcome when a disabled student either (a) utilizes less or equal examination time and achieve grades that are lower than a normally achieving student, or (b) utilizes more examination time and achieve grades that are equal to a normally achieving student. In our data, equal access was provided in all courses (i.e. disabled

students utilized more time than normal achievers), but the expected outcome (i.e. equal grades) was not observed in software and English examinations. The results of this study emphasize the importance of monitoring actual time usage in addition to performance measures when assessing examination time extensions.

Assistive Technology

HE/Public Sector Update: Winning hearts and minds for accessibility (2020)

AbilityNet Webinar

Retrieved from: <https://abilitynet.org.uk/webinars/hepublic-sector-update-winning-hearts-and-minds-accessibility>

Abstract: In this webinar, learn about the experiences of Katey Hugi, Digital Accessibility Coordinator. She has been working with the University of Cambridge School of Clinical Medicine, and Cambridge Judge Business School to engage staff with digital accessibility improvements, with great success. Katey explains her approach to rolling out accessibility training programmes, techniques for encouraging accessibility best practices, and how she drives enthusiasm for ongoing digital inclusion improvements across the university

Autism

Snell-Rood C. et al (2020)

Stakeholder perspectives on transition planning, implementation, and outcomes for students with autism spectrum disorder

Autism (ahead of print) dx.doi.org/10.1177/136236131989482

Abstract: Little is known about factors impacting poor post-school outcomes for transition-age students with autism spectrum disorder. Guided by the Exploration, Preparation, Implementation, and Sustainment implementation science framework, we sought to better understand the interdependent impacts of policy, organisational, provider, and individual factors that shape the transition planning process in schools, and the subsequent process through which transition plans are implemented as youth access services and gain employment after school. We conducted focus groups with individuals with autism spectrum disorder, parents, classroom teachers, school administrators, adult service providers, and state policymakers (10 groups, N = 40). Participants described how core tenets of the individualised education planning process were not reliably implemented: planning was characterized by inappropriate goal-setting, ineffective communication, and inadequate involvement of all decision-makers needed to inform planning. After school, youth struggled to access the services stipulated in their transition plans due to inadequate planning, overburdened services, and insufficient accountability for adult service providers. Finally, a failure to include appropriate skill-building and insufficient interagency and community relationships limited efforts to gain and maintain employment. Diverse stakeholder perspectives illuminate the need for implementation efforts to target the provider, organisational, and policy levels to improve transition outcomes for individuals with autism spectrum disorder.

Wellbeing/ Mental Health

Beasley, Lauren; Kiser, Rebecca; Hoffman, Steven (2020)

Mental health literacy, self-efficacy, and stigma among college Students.

Social Work In Mental Health. 18(6), 634-650. DOI: 10.1080/15332985.2020.1832643.

Kotera, Y; Green, P; Sheffield, D. (2020)

Roles of positive psychology for mental health in UK social work students: Self-compassion as a predictor of better mental health.

British Journal Of Social Work, 50(7), 2002-2021. DOI: 10.1093/bjsw/bcz149.

Abstract: Despite high shame about mental health symptoms among UK social work students, positive psychological approaches to their mental health have not been investigated in depth. Emotional resilience has been a core skill in social work practice; however, its relationship with mental health is still unclear. Therefore, the primary purposes of this cross-sectional study were to (i) examine the relationships between mental health and positive psychological constructs, namely resilience, self-compassion, motivation and engagement and (ii) determine predictors of mental health in UK social work students. An opportunity sampling of 116 UK social work students (102 females, 14 males; 96 undergraduates, 20 postgraduates) completed 5 measures about these constructs. Correlation and regression analyses were conducted. Mental health was associated with resilience, self-compassion and engagement. Self-compassion was a negative predictor, and intrinsic motivation was a positive predictor of mental health symptoms. Resilience did not predict mental health symptoms. The findings highlight the importance of self-compassion to the challenging mental health of UK social work students; they caution against the overuse and misunderstanding of resilience in the social work field.

McKie, A. (2020)

Is 'Covid secure' teaching really best for student well-being? Scientists query government claim that in-person tuition is vital for mental health.

Times Higher Education. 2469, 9-9

Menendez, J.; Franco, Marisa; D., Jaleh; Gnilka, P. (2020)

Barriers and facilitators to Latinx college students seeking counseling.

Journal Of College Student Psychotherapy. 34 (4), 302-315

DOI: 10.1080/87568225.2019.1600093.

Abstract: Despite the large and growing population of Latinx individuals in the United States, a number of studies have highlighted the underutilization of mental health services among the Latinx population (e.g., Pieters & Heilemann, 2010; Surgeon General, 2000). This is concerning given that Latinxs tend to have higher prevalence rates of psychotic disorders and depressive symptoms compared to non-Latinx Whites (Driscoll & Torres, 2013; Gelman, 2004). Given the rapid growth of this population, along with the service underutilization for this group, the current study sought to examine barriers and facilitators to Latinxs' mental health service utilization

McCarthy, K. (2020)

Resident assistant secondary trauma and burnout associated with student non-suicidal self-injury.

Journal Of American College Health, 68(7), 673-677,

DOI: 10.1080/07448481.2019.1590374

Abstract: Objective: To determine whether or not encountering students struggling with nonsuicidal self-injury (NSSI) put resident assistants (RAs) at greater risk of burnout or secondary traumatic stress. Participants: One hundred and fifty-five RAs at three Midwest public university campuses between March and April 2016. Methods: RAs participated in an anonymous online survey that collected demographics, information on RAs' experiences and thoughts related to their work, RAs' exposure to NSSI struggle of a resident, and measurements of compassion satisfaction, burnout, and secondary traumatic stress. Results: RAs who encountered resident NSSI demonstrated significantly higher levels of burnout and secondary traumatic stress than RAs who did not encounter resident NSSI. Conclusion: College students struggle with NSSI can significantly affect the people around them. Residence life administration and college counselling centers should provide training, support, and supervision to RAs in a way that addresses and reduces the RAs' potential distress.

McNealy, K.; Lombardero, A. (2020)

Somatic presentation of mental health concerns, stigma, and mental health treatment engagement among college students.

Journal Of American College Health, 68, 774-781, DOI: 10.1080/07448481.2019.1590372

Morgan, J. (2020)

Help cut Covid toll on mental health: Universities must support students as pandemic pressures rise.

Times Higher Education. 2469, 16

Student mental health crisis

BBC Three documentary

Retrieved from: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/iplayer/episode/p08ywqsy/the-student-mental-health-crisis>

Abstract: Much like the rest of the UK, universities across the country were forced into lockdown in March of this year. But on returning this autumn, millions of students have been met with a university experience they never could have anticipated. A BBC investigation has found that during the first lockdown over March through to May there were at least 10 suspected student suicides at UK universities, according to a freedom of information requests submitted to 137 institutions. This BBC investigation also analysed local news reports, spoke to family members and friends and found that since March there has been at least 17 additional suspected student suicides. 12 of which took place since students returned to universities on September 2. In 2018 universities were told they had to address the mental health crisis on campus, but over two years later, nearly half - 47% of the 96 universities that responded told BBC News they still hold no data or records on student suicides.

With questions continuing to be raised about what can and should be done to better support students mental health and wellbeing at this time, BBC journalist Hannah Price travels across the UK to speak to families and friends of students who have taken their lives during the pandemic.

Sutton, Halley (2020)

Support students of color through mental health challenges.

Disability Compliance for Higher Education 26(5) 9-9. DOI: 10.1002/dhe.30956.

Abstract: According to the report, the “Task Force’s work represents the first time leaders from across sectors have come together to consider the mental health status and needs of young Americans of color, a population that is the driving force of our nation’s future economic and social wellbeing.”

Collaborate across departments to effectively support students

The report included the following findings about how COVID-19 and the movement for racial justice in the wake of the George Floyd killing have disproportionately mentally impacted students of color:

Young, E; Thompson, R; Sharp, J; Bosmans, D (2020)

Emotional transitions? Exploring the student experience of entering higher education in a widening-participation HE-in-FE setting.

Journal Of Further & Higher Education, 44 (10) 1349-1363

DOI: 10.1080/0309877X.2019.1688264

Abstract: This paper details a small-scale research project that explores the student transition into higher education (HE), delivered in a further education college (FE), and considers whether the requirements of transition at this level impacts on emotional wellbeing. As such, it aims to contribute to the growing body of research on HE-in-FE from the perspective of student transition and emotional wellbeing. The data drawn on in this paper were collected by a questionnaire, administered at two points in the first semester, to measure levels of anxiety in students, alongside a further questionnaire designed to evaluate the effectiveness of bespoke academic skills input aimed at supporting the transition into HE. From quantitative and qualitative data, key findings identify factors that influence students’ emotional responses to HE, including those that exacerbate and those that mitigate negative emotional responses. Significantly, the research identifies academic factors, rather than personal or social issues, as being critical to students’ emotional experiences during the transitional period.

PROOF

PROOF

ADVERTISING: Mail your publicity with the next issue. For £80 you can reach 350 library and information workers in government departments, universities, social services departments, voluntary associations, research organisations, professional bodies etc.

BACK ISSUES still available (£14 each):

Cheques payable to ALISS (payment with order)

Editor: Heather Dawson, British Library of Political and Economic Science,
10 Portugal Street, London WC2A 2HD. Email: h.dawson@lse.ac.uk