Advancing Racial Equity in Public Libraries

Case Studies from the Field

Government Alliance on Race and Equity
Gordon Goodwin
Seattle Public Library
Andrew Harbison
Who are we?

Andrew Harbison, Seattle Public Library

Gordon F. Goodwin, GARE
GARE Libraries - Our Goal

The goal of the GARE Libraries Interest group is to develop the capacity of libraries to make racial equity a priority within our libraries, cities, communities and national associations.
Today’s Objectives:

• Gain awareness
• Understand approaches
• See examples of equity efforts
• Be motivated to take action
Government Alliance on Race and Equity

A national network of government working to achieve racial equity and advance opportunities for all.

✓ Launched as a member network in 2016 (12 members)
✓ Membership network of 93 members (and growing!)
✓ Subject area working groups also include public works, criminal justice and policing, human resources, procurement / purchasing, and many more.
What is Racial Equity?
Racial inequity in the U.S.

From infant mortality to life expectancy, race predicts how well you will do...
Racial equity means:

Closing the gaps so that race does not predict one’s success, while improving outcomes for all
Achieving racial equity requires us to...

....Target strategies to focus improvements for those worse off

....Move beyond service provision to focus on changing policies, institutions and structures
What created racial inequity?
History of government and race

Initially explicit

Government explicitly creates and maintains racial inequity.

Became implicit

Discrimination illegal, but “race-neutral” policies and practices perpetuate inequity.

Government for racial equity

Proactive policies, practices and procedures that advance racial equity.
When Leading with Race, we are…

….Race explicit, not exclusive always bring an “intersectional” analysis

• Race and gender …..
• “ “ “ “ disability status….
• “ “ “ “ “ income inequality
Shift the focus to develop solutions
### Asking Different Questions

**FROM:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Questions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Blame</td>
<td>Who’s a racist?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intentions</td>
<td>What did they mean? What was their attitude?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prejudice</td>
<td>What beliefs made them do it?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grievance</td>
<td>How can we fix what just happened?</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**TO:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Causes</td>
<td>What’s causing the racial inequities?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Effects</td>
<td>What were the actions? What are the impacts?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Systems</td>
<td>What institutions are responsible?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Solutions</td>
<td>What proactive strategies and solutions?</td>
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</table>
Equity? Equality?  
What’s the difference?
How We Think

Humans need meaning.
  • Individual meaning
  • Collective meaning

Only 2% of emotional cognition is available consciously

Racial bias tends to reside in the unconscious network
Bias at work

Institutional/Explicit

Policies which explicitly discriminate against a group.

People of color historically prohibited from using libraries by force of law (this occurred in the South and North)

Institutional/Implicit

Policies that negatively impact one group unintentionally.

Library’s strict enforcement of fine collection disproportionately creates barriers to people of color, who are overrepresented among low-income populations

Individual/Explicit

Prejudice in action – discrimination.

Library staff person lets a patron know that they are not being served because they are a different race

Individual/Implicit

Unconscious attitudes and beliefs.

Staff decides to renew a lost item, extend return date, mark as “claims returned” or waive charges more often for white patrons than for patrons of color
GARE Equity Framework
NORMALIZE
1) Cultivate high-level investment
2) Establish internal Change Teams

ORGANIZE
3) Build capacity among staff and stakeholders
4) Partner with other institutions and communities

OPERATIONALIZE
5) Use Racial Equity Assessment Tools
6) Create a Racial Equity Action Plan
Does your library have a racial equity initiative?
Case Studies
# Seattle Public Library

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Normalize</th>
<th>Organize</th>
<th>Operationalize</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Re-established Change Team</td>
<td>• All-Staff Training</td>
<td>• Adopt and expand application of tools</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Executive Support</td>
<td>• Budget Allocation</td>
<td>• Design and Implementation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Set Strategic Direction</td>
<td>• Inter-Agency Collaboration</td>
<td>• Service Delivery</td>
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**Local and Regional Government Alliance on Race & Equity**

**race forward & CSI Center for Social Inclusion**
Operationalizing / Making a Difference

- **Website Redesign**
  - *Applied equity analysis to the new website design process and integrate findings into the website’s design and implementation.*

- **Staff Communications and Engagement**
  - *Develop internal communications and engagement activities on RSJI and equity-related topics, including All Staff Day trainings*

- **Systemwide Program Design and Development**
  - *Completed an equity analysis of the flagship “one city, one book” Seattle Reads program and redesign programming and engagement strategies accordingly.*
Seattle: Mobile Services Redistribution

Preschools Served by Bookmobile Spring 2017

- Public: Low-income families: 66%
- Private: Over 25% subsidized: 18%
- Private: Under 25% subsidized: 16%

Preschools Served by Bookmobile Fall 2018

- Public: Low-income families: 81%
- Private: Over 25% subsidized: 3%
- Private: Under 25% subsidized: 16%
Hennepin County Library
## Hennepin: Capital Improvement Plan

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DATA POINT</th>
<th>Crime Index 2017</th>
<th>Education - High School or Higher</th>
<th>Hispanic Population &amp; People of Color</th>
<th>Language – English Not Very Well</th>
<th>Poverty</th>
<th>Rental Occupied Housing</th>
<th>Unemployment Rate – 16 &amp; Over</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>WHAT IS THIS?</td>
<td>Data from ESRI &amp; Applied Geographic Solutions</td>
<td>American Community Survey</td>
<td>American Community Survey</td>
<td>American Community Survey</td>
<td>American Community Survey</td>
<td>ESRI &amp; US Census</td>
<td>American Community Survey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HOW IS IT ORDERED?</td>
<td>Weights communities with a higher than average crime rate.</td>
<td>Weights communities with lower percentage of high school graduates.</td>
<td>Weights communities with higher percentage of Hispanic population and people of color.</td>
<td>Weights communities with higher percent of residents who have primary language other than English and do not speak English well.</td>
<td>Weights communities that have greater percent of residents experiencing poverty.</td>
<td>Weights communities that have higher percent of occupied housing units that are rentals.</td>
<td>Weights communities that have higher percentages of residents who are unemployed.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

*In Minnesota, people of color are more likely to live in poverty and suffer chronic illness, and less likely to graduate and own their own home. Learn more at Minnesota Compass (www.mncompass.org/disparities/overview), which is led by Wilder Research.
Madison Public Library
Madison Public Library

Equity in City Operations
Equity in City Policies and Budgets
Equity in the Community

LIBRARY TAKEOVER
MAKE Your Idea Here HAPPEN AT YOUR LIBRARY

Sarah Lawton
Neighborhood Library Supervisor
Madison Public Library

LOCAL AND REGIONAL GOVERNMENT
ALLIANCE ON
RACE & EQUITY

race forward

CENTER FOR
SOCIAL INCLUSION
“For most libraries in the GARE network, addressing barriers to employment and workplace inclusion for staff of color is a critical first step. This includes careful examination of racial bias in recruiting, hiring and workplace culture.”
Librarian demographics

- 87 percent of librarians are white
- 73 percent of library assistants are white
- Nearly three quarters of librarians are white women

ALA Members by Race or Family Origin

- 86.70% White
- 4.00% Asian
- 3.6% - 4.4% Black / African American
- 1.20% American Indian / Alaskan Native
- 0.20% Hawaiian or Pacific Islander
- 0.20% Other

ALA Office of Research and Statistics Demographic Study Report 2017
What racism are we focusing on?

**Individual racism:**
- Bigotry or discrimination by an individual based on race.

**Institutional racism:**
- Policies, practices and procedures that work better for white people than for people of color, often unintentionally or inadvertently.

**Structural racism:**
- A history and current reality of institutional racism across all institutions, combining to create a system that negatively impacts communities of color.
"We must act with urgency. As institutions committed to values of democracy and intellectual freedom, libraries have an obligation to move beyond diversity initiatives to grapple more actively with the power and responsibility of our position."

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