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COVID-19, collections, and collaboration

Promoting inclusivity from the ground up

The promotion of a library's resources often relies on using its physical space with physical displays. With COVID-19, many libraries are either not physically open or their services have been modified where there are limitations with who or how many people are allowed to enter their buildings. Promoting areas in the collection may take on creative and new methods during the pandemic, including the use of virtual displays or online resource guides. Creating virtual displays can also become an opportunity to support and promote equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) within the library and campus wide.

EDI efforts are fundamental values of ALA and ACRL. Building diverse collections is not only within ACRL's Diversity Standards: Cultural Competency for Academic Libraries,[1] it is also implied in Article 1 of the Library Bill of Rights:[2]

> Books and other library resources should be provided for the interest, information, and enlightenment of all people of the community the library serves. Materials should not be excluded because of the origin, background, or views of those contributing to their creation.

As libraries continue to build diverse collections for their communities, the promotion of their resources is key for their patrons to become aware of what they have access to. This is especially challenging when access to libraries may look differently during the pandemic. Creating displays and resource guides can help build relationships on campus and can be a successful avenue to support EDI initiatives and promote areas of the collection to patrons.

Background

Like many academic libraries, Clemson University Libraries has operated with modified services starting in the spring of 2020 due to COVID-19 restrictions implemented by the university. Some of the modified operations have included making reservations to use the study spaces, scanning university IDs to gain entrance to the building, and picking up requested books and equipment from the lobby. In addition to these changes, there have been no in-person events held to engage with students to promote our resources and services, and there have not been any physical displays of library materials.

Before operating with modified services, Cooper Library had one large display area and one smaller display area, both visible to students as they entered the library. Typical physical displays before the pandemic tended to celebrate national or international awareness months, such as Women's History Month, Black History Month, Pride, or Latinx Heritage Month. Library employees would volunteer to create these displays throughout the year based on their interests or their work with campus partners.

Clemson Libraries currently does not have a position fully dedicated to outreach or to diversity initiatives, and small working groups or committees try to support EDI efforts. During the early summer

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of 2020, our colleagues from the Libraries Diversity Committee created a robust online resource guide to support EDI, which included resources regarding COVID-19 and racism, racial injustice, and anti-racism, leadership, equity, student success, and resources to support diversity initiatives on campus. From this guide, we saw how we could explore creating virtual displays through using online resource guides and supporting the Libraries' EDI efforts.

Planning stages

We began to plan outreach ideas for the fall 2020 semester knowing that the library would be operating with modified services. As the undergraduate experience librarian and library specialist supporting research services and outreach, our positions include outreach to students in various ways, so

Figure 1. Latinx Voices and Readings LibGuide from Clemson Libraries.

we often work together on events, displays, and programming for students. We knew that our outreach activities could not include in-person events, so we started thinking of how to promote events happening on campus, and we focused on how we could highlight areas of the collection to support EDI events and initiatives that were already happening.

Looking at the fall academic calendar, we decided to prioritize researching resources that would support Latinx and Hispanic Heritage Month, as this celebration was quickly approaching from September 15 to October 15. After some research, we curated resources and created a Latinx and Hispanic Voices and Readings guide to promote during Latinx and Hispanic Heritage Month.[3] The guide included books owned by Clemson Libraries and recommended reading lists of Latinx authors, Latinx characters, and resources for Latinx and Hispanic Heritage Month (Figure 1).
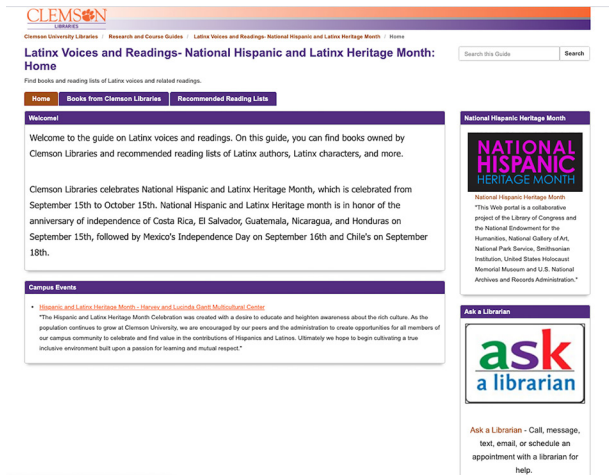
Working with our student intern who created graphics as well as the library's marketing team, we were able to cross-promote events being held on campus by our campus' multicultural center with the resource guide on social media. We were able to share and get feedback from the university commission on Latino affairs to promote the guide.

Our outreach plans also included supporting Coming Out Week on campus during October, so we began researching what had been done in the past at our library to support this awareness week. The goal was to curate resources for an LGBTQ+ Voices and Readings guide before Coming Out Week, which is celebrated October 5 to October 10, however, we were not able to complete it until Trans Awareness Month, which is celebrated on campus during late November. With this guide,[4] we were able to work more closely with the university LGBT commission to get more in-depth feedback on the resource guide (Figure 2).

As we were planning and working on these online resource guides, we were approached by a colleague on campus who was chairing the Asian Pacific American Heritage Month Committee, and she wanted to see how the library could be involved. We were able to show her the resource guides we were working on and offered the idea to her and to the committee. The committee was excited about a guide that supported Asian Pacific Americans, and this guide will continue to evolve before May 2021, when Asian Pacific American Heritage Month is celebrated.

Recommendations

Ensuring that the resource guides were relevant took on a process that has evolved over time and included varying levels of collaborative work with campus partners. The following recommenda-

tions stem from what we learned over the course of creating multiple guides and working with various partners on campus.

Analyze internal resources

Conducting an analysis of what your library has currently or had in the past to support EDI initiatives can help to better understand any gaps in supporting those initiatives. Your library may already have a resource guide or a listing of related works that was curated in previous years, which could be a good starting place. In addition to your library's past and present resources, you can survey the resources that are available online from partners to help identify potential gaps that the library could help fill. Partners could include student groups, local public libraries, or community organizations.

Our process included surveying the Springshare LibGuides that already existed within Clemson Libraries, talking with colleagues and the library's Diversity Committee, as well as researching what displays had been done in the past to support these initiatives. We noticed that although there were efforts in previous years to promote Latinx and Hispanic Heritage Month, there were no plans for the fall of 2020. We also noticed that there had been many physical displays in the past that centered on the LGBTQ+ experience, but no one place that held additional resources, such as access to magazines and journals. When we looked at the resources available from our multicultural center on campus to support the LGBTQ+ community, we noticed that we could help provide access to many publications that are behind paywalls.

Reach out to partners

Once you identified areas that may need support, creating or growing a partnership to make sure

Figure 2: LGBTQ+ Voices and Readings LibGuide from Clemson Libraries.

the resources truly meet a need is next. Communicate with colleagues both within and outside of your library or institution to make connections, and start the conversation of how best the library can provide resources that support EDI programs or initiatives. This also includes getting feedback on the potential resources to ensure they are relevant to the needs of your campus.

With our own experience, we recognize that we should have reached out to our partners earlier with the Latinx and Hispanic Voices and Readings guide. It could have been a more robust guide had we gotten more of their input at the beginning stages of the process. Although we were able to reach out to the Commission of Latino Affairs at our university and receive feedback, we would have liked to have reached out to them at the beginning of the planning process to better understand our campus' needs.

Communicate and revise

After curating resources, share your work with colleagues within your library, colleagues outside of your library, and the communities that the resources support to receive feedback and continually revise your work.

Communicating with others was important to our process of creating relevant resource guides. As previously mentioned, to best understand what had taken place in the past, we had conversations with veteran librarians, as well as the library's Diversity Committee to ensure we were not duplicating efforts they were already planning. We also contacted our colleagues that were on university committees or commissions to get their advice and guidance, and we communicated with those outside of the libraries to gauge their interest and ask for feedback on the guides.

By obtaining feedback from the LGBTQ+ Commission on campus, we were able to provide additional resources we were unaware of, such as the Lambda
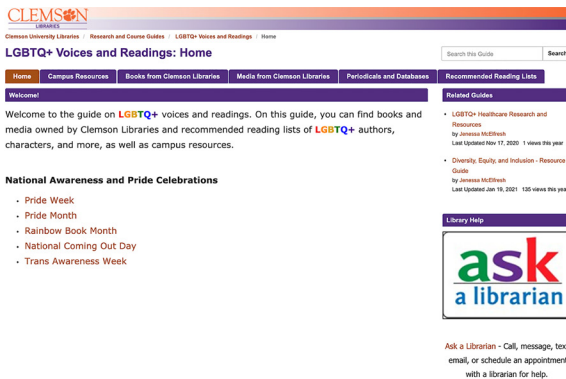
Literary Awards, and resources we had not thought about, such as student government resources. We recognized our limitations, as we are not a part of the communities we were trying to support.

Impact and next steps

We recognize that we are at a starting place for promoting inclusivity and diverse collections. Although we saw increases in views of the guides tied to when they were promoted on social media, our goal is to meet needs on campus and highlight the lived experiences of underrepresented communities, as well as resources that support and celebrate these communities. We want to make sure that we can continue to maintain online resource guides to meet the needs of our patrons and plan to grow our partnerships with organizations on campus during and post-COVID-19.

Our process was not as smooth and was not as ideal as we would have liked. We were pushed with time and would have liked to have had more extended conversations with people in order to promote these areas of the collection. However, our reflection on our process has allowed us to see areas of improvement and has helped guide us with our next steps. With promoting inclusivity, we recognize that this is an on-going process and not a one-time activity.

Notes

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2. ALA, "Diverse Collections: An Interpretation of the Library Bill of Rights," July 26, 2006, www.ala.org/advocacy/intfreedom/librarybill/interpretations/diversecollections.

3. Clemson Libraries, "Latinx Voices and Readings," September 11, 2020, https://clemson.libguides.com/latinxvoices.

4. Clemson Libraries, "LGBT+ Voices and Readings," October 5, 2020, https://clemson.libguides.com/LGBTQ.

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2. Gert Hofstede, "Dimensionalizing cultures: The Hofstede model in context," *Online Readings in Psychology and Culture* 2, no. 1 (2011), https://doi.org/10.9707/2307-0919.1014.

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7. Alice M. Cruz, "Intentional Integration of Diversity Ideals in Academic Libraries: A Literature Review," *The Journal of Academic Librarianship* 45, no. 3 (2019): 220-227.

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10. U.S. Department of Education International Affairs Office, Succeeding Globally Through International Education and Engagement (2018), https://sites.ed.gov/international/international-strategy-2/ (accessed February 11, 2021).

11. Stephen R. Covey, *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People* (New York: Free Press, 2004).