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Our Website Redesign Project and the Creation of a DEIA Statement

Vacek, Rachel

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Our Website Redesign Project and the Creation of a DEIA Statement

Rachel Vacek, Head of Design & Discovery
University of Michigan Library

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First, I'm going to provide some context about who we are and why we created a statement about how principles of diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility inform and accompany the stages of our website redesign project.

Web Presence
Steering Committee

Steward and champion a clear
vision for the library's public
facing web presence

A parent committee to:

- Web Content Coordinator Group
- Intranet Team
- Library Search Team
- Discovery & Access Advisory Group
- Website Redesign Project Team

The Web Presence Steering Committee was formed in early 2018 to address the
need for improved web governance. It has direct responsibility for managing the web
applications (not necessarily the service) connected to library website, and provides
stewardship for the experience layer across the entire web presence. To fulfill this
responsibility on a project and operational basis, it is the parent committee for teams
that oversee:

- The library's main website, and the dozens of sites and services that integrate
  with it
- Web content and web governance
- The Intranet
- Our discovery tools, ways to improve access to resources, and Library Search

A decade has elapsed since the launch of the library's current website. During that
time, user needs and expectations for research, teaching, and learning have evolved
significantly, and technology has greatly changed. In Summer 2018, the WPSC
charged the Website Redesign Project Team, with Heidi as the project manager.

WPSC Members

Heidi Burkhardt
Web Project Manager & Content Strategist

Steve Griffes
Senior Manager for User Services &
Operations Outreach

Robyn Ness
Senior User Experience Specialist

Alexa Pearce (co-chair)
Head of Social Sciences & Clark Library

Alan Piñon
Director of Marketing and Communications

Whitney Townsend
Informationist

Rachel Vacek (co-chair)
Head of Design & Discovery

Ken Varnum
Senior Program Manager

Website Redesign Project Team

Make the thing

The redesigned site will:

- Invite and connect with our users
- Enable user engagement with the full breadth of resources that our library offers
- Adhere to current and emerging standards for accessibility and user experience
- Align with efforts to transform physical spaces

The Website Redesign Project Team kicked off in July 2018. There are 11 people on the team from three different divisions in the library, including Operations, Communications and Marketing, and Library IT.

There are many goals for the redesigned site. will:
- Invite and connect with our users
- Enable user engagement with the full breadth of resources that our library offers, including services, spaces, expertise, and collections
- Adhere to current and emerging standards for accessibility and user experience
- Align with efforts to transform physical spaces. Doing this will allow users to understand the library holistically.

WPSC's role in supporting the project has been to provide support, assist with decisions and setting priorities and timelines, and to coordinate communication about the redesign from a high level to the library and campus community.

Why we developed our DEIA Statement

Espouse and elevate principles of diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility in our work

Why:

- Received constructive criticism about lack of diversity in teams
- Accessibility, user research, inclusive language, etc., was built into the project from the beginning
- Attention to committee formation and approaches was mixed

As part of the communication strategy for the Website Redesign, Alexa Pearce and and I, as the co-chairs for the WPSC, began strategically giving presentations to various groups in the library. In December 2018, we gave a 30-minute presentation to the entire library. The presentation itself was well-received, but we received some constructive criticism from our colleagues in the week after the presentation. The feedback was about the lack of diversity on the project team, and the perceived lack of diversity in the snapshot of the personas that were created and being used with the project.

We knew that accessibility had been baked into our plans from the beginning. The project team had been doing extensive user research with diverse groups on campus. We also knew that our content style guide for the website used inclusive language. We needed a better way to communicate our efforts, as well as demonstrating efforts going forward, were taking into consideration DEIA principles.

This prompted some reflective and somewhat difficult conversations at our next several WPSC meetings.

Considerations

Document and share our general approach to elevating DEIA principles and ensure they inform and accompany all stages of a project

Questions we asked ourselves:

- How should we engage with the criticism we received?
- Not all diversity is visible, but is this an adequate response?
- How do we avoid tokenism?
- How do we adjust within existing limitations?

We knew that we didn't want to be defensive. Instead, we wanted to engage with the criticism and recognize its validity. We were also are very aware that not all diversity is visible. And we definitely wanted to avoid tokenism.

But when we had originally discussed team formation for the Website Redesign Project, we thought overwhelmingly about each member's role and representation in terms of job function, expertise, department, location in the organization, etc, as opposed to specific focus on diversity and inclusion.

We recognized the limitations we have in our library, but all our conversations prompted us to think about what we could do to engage with the criticism we received. Alexa and I also talked with Jeff Witt, our library's Diversity and Inclusion Specialist. We decided to create a DEIA Statement that would document our general approach to elevating DEIA principles. We could show how we're thinking about DEIA in the administrative components as well as in the content and substance of the website redesign project.

And having a DEIA Statement would be easy to share with library staff and users alike. It demonstrates how we are practicing DEIA intentionality in all the stages of our project work.

**So we created a
Website Redesign Project:
DEIA Statement**

http://bit.ly/UMLibraryWebsiteDEIA

DEIA Statement - Outline

- Statement Purpose
- Team Structure and Engagement
    - Team Norms and Project Charter
    - Diversity of Membership
    - Inclusive Communication: Internal Focus
- User-Focused Methods and Practices
    - User Research and Usability Testing
    - Persona Development
    - Accessibility for Everyone
    - Inclusive Content
    - Equitable Access
- Resources

What's in the actual DEIA Statement? Here's an outline. We broke it up into 4 sections:
- Statement Purpose
- Team Structure and Engagement
- User-Focused Methods and Practices, and the
- Resources we referenced

Sharing the DEIA Statement

Seek out expertise, be open to feedback, and strive for transparency

What we did:

- Sought feedback from Diversity and Inclusion Specialist and Accessibility Specialist
- Shared with Library Diversity Council and Digital Accessibility Team
- Held Brown Bag in May 2019

So after we created the DEIA statement, and described how DEIA principles were manifesting in the structure of and our approach to the Website Redesign Project, we felt it was important to get additional feedback from some local experts. We shared our document with Jeff Witt, the library's Diversity and Inclusion Specialist whom I mentioned previously, as well as Stephanie Rosen, the library's Accessibility Specialist. Their unique perspective and feedback was incredibly valuable in honing language and the ideas we were trying to convey.

We also shared the statement with the LIbrary Diversity Council, and the Digital Accessibility Team. (Some of you may have heard Ben Howell and I talk yesterday morning about this at "Transforming Library Culture with a Digital Accessibility Team.")

In May as part of our Library's month-long celebration of DEIA, we held a brown bag and invited discussion and feedback on the statement. We also discussed if people in the room were interested in their teams documenting DEIA considerations for the approach to and substance of their work.

Being a model

Practice intentionality in elevating DEIA principles when creating teams and doing project work

Who's adapting the approach in our library:

- Deans' Office

- Library Service Design Program

These conversations from the Brown Bag helped to generate a lot of interest throughout the library, not only in using the DEIA statement as a model, but in applying many of the strategies Heidi just outlined, all to help elevate DEIA principles in the creation of teams, and in making project plans, communication plans, assessment plans, etc.

A few groups in the library are using our statement (and our approach to practicing intentionality) as a model for creating large project teams for big change initiatives.

For example, the Deans' Office -- which includes HR, Marketing & Communication, Development, Finance, Diversity, Project Management, and Assessment -- is looking at adapting this for some upcoming major initiatives.

The Service Design Task Force, of which I am a member, is in the process of drafting a DEIA Statement for the library's new Service Design Program. The program consists of a suite of **expertise**, **tools, and services** that enable the generation of new ideas and solutions for the challenges and opportunities faced by staff and the university community. Our goal of developing a statement:
- Is to ensure that DEIA principles inform and accompany how we operate as a team
- Is represented in all stages of the Library Service Design Roadmap
- Is in the services the Program offers to the library community

Thank you!

- http://bit.ly/UMLibraryWebsiteDEIA
- What do you think?
- Could other types of teams and other libraries document DEIA considerations for the approach to and substance of their work?
- Is anything missing?

Email Rachel at rvacek@umich.edu with questions or comments