The Diversity Audit

A Systematic Approach to Creating Diverse Collections

Jennifer Cyr and Ellen Bleaney
Region of Waterloo Library
Today's Session

• Intro – who we are and why we decided to do a diversity audit
• The audit – what it is and how did we did it
• Assessment – our results and how benchmarks lead to goals
• Improvements – short and long term fixes to balance the collection
• Questions
The Region of Waterloo – Who we are

• **The Region of Waterloo** is Kitchener, Cambridge, Waterloo and the four townships: Wilmot, Wellesley, Woolwich and North Dumfries.

• **The Region of Waterloo Library** serves the four townships (pop. 67,024) through 10 branches and 3 satellite locations.
Who Our Residents Are

Visible Minorities (Percentage)

South Asians are most prevalent, representing 1.2% of our population served.

Mother Tongue (Percentage)

Of the 18% of residents that have a mother tongue other than French or English, 64% identify German as their first language (11% of total pop.).

Source: Statistics Canada, Census 2016 by Census Subdivision
Region of Waterloo Library

• **Our Vision:** To engage, empower and inspire a creative and literate community.

• **Our Mission:** Creating opportunities for all residents, the Library helps rural communities thrive by providing resources for learning, enjoyment and discovery, and by offering every child literacy support that lasts a lifetime.
Why We Decided to look at Diversity
The Chanukkah Tree

Eric A. Kimmel
illustrated by Giora Carmi
The Audit

the nitty-gritty of how it's done
(and ways to avoid our mistakes)
Full Population Audit

• **Pros:** it doesn't get more accurate than this
• **Cons:** may be literally impossible
Random or Systematic Samples

- **Pros:** most statistically valid way to audit a subset of your collection
- **Cons:** harder to set up; significant sample size may still be too large
Convenience Sample

- **Pros:** it will, by definition, be extremely convenient
- **Cons:** your statistician friends aren't *angry*, they're just *disappointed*
"If a thing is worth doing, it is worth doing badly."

G.K. Chesterton
# Diversity Audit

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<th>Indigenous</th>
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<td>Elmo loves you : a poem by Elmo / Albee, Sarah.</td>
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<td>Alligator's Halloween hayride / Alexander, Heather.</td>
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**tickmark chart VS. spreadsheet**
Classification is not neutral.

All systems of classification are inherently biased.
Race and Ethnicity

• White
• Asian
• Black
• Latinx
• Indigenous
• Middle Eastern
• Pacific Islander
• "Other"
"I Love You Like a Pig"
by Mac Barnett
“Do the best you can until you know better. Then when you know better, do do better.”

Maya Angelou
The Actual Audit

*(finally, right?)*

- Go to the books
- Experiment with timing
- Coordinate carefully
- Remember ergonomics
Assessment

you've got the data – now what?
Benchmarks & Areas of Focus

• Demographics
• Organizational Goals and Values
• Current Issues
• Audit Results
## Our Audit Results

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<th>Category</th>
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<tr>
<td>Total Books Reviewed</td>
<td>857</td>
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<tr>
<td>Books with humans</td>
<td>73%</td>
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<td>Animals or non-humans only</td>
<td>27%</td>
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<td>Books where one or more criteria apply</td>
<td>88%</td>
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<td>Books where no criteria apply</td>
<td>12%</td>
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Many books that did not have human characters still exhibited characteristics like gender or religion and so those were noted.
Gender/Sexuality

- 60% of main characters were coded as male; 56% overall.
- Often when staff interpreted no gender or that they could be either, the character was coded as non-binary or non-conforming.
- Only two books explicitly showed families featuring same-sex parents.
• White characters were noted 59% of the time but actually account for 77% of main characters.

• Black folks make up 28% of background characters but only 9% of main characters.

• Indigenous characters represent only 1% of main characters.
Kamik: An Inuit Puppy Story
Adapted from the memories of
Donald Ululittuk
illustrated by Qin Leng

I Am Truly
by Kelly Greenawalt
illustrated by Amarish Kuscher
• No representations of Hinduism, Buddhism or Sikhism were found

• Of books focused on holiday themes, 95% of characters celebrated Christian holidays or otherwise identified themselves as Christian
Disability or neurodiversity

- Only 11 books had characters that had a disability or displayed neurodiverse behaviour.
- 5 of these titles didn't have a primary character, but all characters had same visibility.
LIBRARIES ARE FOR EVERYONE
Setting Goals

Identify Gaps

Identify priorities
   Muslim
   Disabilities
   LGBTQ+ Families

Set Achievable Targets
   Allocate funds towards your areas of concern
   Devote time to work on selecting for these areas
   Recognize publishing still needs to catch up with demand
Solutions for Improvement

• One time fixes
  • Specific purchase of titles

• Ongoing Activities
  • Tell selectors to focus more on diverse characters
  • Co-ordinate with branch staff to promote diverse themes
  • Set aside budget target for

• Procedural Changes
  • Formalize weeding policy to "extend" the life of diverse books
  • Discus with children's programmers their usage of diverse books
Resources

- Doing a YA Collection Diversity Audit (Karen Jensen, Teen Librarian Toolbox)
- From Sea to Seas: Celebrating Indigenous Picture Books (IBBY)
- Further Reading: Demand for Diversity (Booknet Canada)
- An Updated Look at Diversity in Children's Books (School Library Journal)
- Mirror and Window Books Why and How (Sandra Hughes-Hassell, UNC-Chapel Hill)
- We Need Diverse Books
Questions?

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