DEI Work in a Divided Community

TSS LACONI Panel Presentation

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SWAN

LIBRARY SERVICES

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Topics

- Working in a divided community
- Working with potential pushback in mind
- Countering opposition

Working in a Divided Community

- Emotions can run high in topics related to diversity and inclusion

- Recent discussion and incidents both local and national:
  - Objections to mask mandates
  - Library materials being challenged

- Considerations
  - Emotional and physical safety of library staff and patrons
  - Funding, hours, and employment

Feedback SWAN has received

- People unfamiliar with metadata work may misunderstand our work

- Possible misconceptions:
  - We are removing materials
  - We are removing access points
  - We are setting collection policy

- SWAN member leadership has been overwhelmingly supportive

- Concerns include:
  - Being ready to respond to pushback
  - Clearing up misconceptions
  - Transparency

Meeting pushback with reason and transparency

- Focus on promoting access to your collection

- Mindful promotion of subject heading changes

- Document everything

- Appeal to local demographics

Focus on promoting access

- SWAN has not removed access points, but has masked some from display only
  - This served us well when some concerns were raised

- Ground decisions in patron behavior and meet the community where they are

- Use data to back up decisions whenever possible

Mindful promotion

- For SWAN, this work was initiated by member staff, so we communicate only to member staff

- Good data work is often invisible to users

- Carefully consider who your stakeholders are

- Those who want to see this work done will know; those that don't will not have their experience affected in any perceivable way.

Document, document, document

- Directors and staff have requested very detailed documentation

- Answer these questions:
  - What changes are made?
    - Conversion pathways, supplementary vocabularies, accompanying metadata
  - Why?
    - Cite patron/staff requests, summaries of task force and community discussion, research materials, precedent
  - How?
    - Process documentation, scripts, training initiatives

- Make sure documentation is accessible to all levels of metadata/cataloging knowledge

Know your demographics

- Identify where DEI decisions are of greatest service to your local demographics

- Bring the people to the forefront of the conversation

- Use statistics to ground your choices in the community you serve

Questions?