Trans-inclusive systems design

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I don’t speak for everyone
Language changes fast
This stuff is complicated
Solutions look different in different contexts
LMGTFY
glossary

- Gender identity
- Sex
- Gender binary
- AMAB/AFAB
- Cisgender/cis
- Transgender/trans*
- Nonbinary
- Deadnaming
- Pronouns
Trans-inclusive design at A List Apart

- Honor names of use
  ...and check integration points for cascades
- Ask for gender rarely and thoughtfully
- Check assumptions
- Protect privacy
- Remember and design for intersections
- Help people see themselves
Names are complicated

Falsehoods Programmers Believe About Names

So, as a public service, I’m going to list assumptions your systems probably make about names. All of these assumptions are wrong. Try to make less of them next time you write a system which touches names.

1. People have exactly one canonical full name.
2. People have exactly one full name which they go by.
3. People have, at this point in time, exactly one canonical full name.
4. People have, at this point in time, one full name which they go by.
5. People have exactly N names, for any value of N.
6. People’s names fit within a certain defined amount of space.
7. People’s names do not change.
8. People’s names change, but only at a certain enumerated set of events.

Names are important

- For many trans folks, name changes mean a whole lot.
  - Many obstacles to legal name changes
  - Different contexts, different names

- Systems can be slow to catch up, especially at the enterprise level.
  - Identity management systems and legal records
  - Learning management systems and classroom roll-call
  - Library systems

- Result: little control over name changes in systems can result in deadnaming and/or outing library users
What we’ve done at VCU

● Checked where we use names and gender markers in systems
  ○ Alma patron import override to accommodate name-of-use change requests
  ○ Made sure users can change their names in ILLiad
  ○ Checked integration points w/enterprise ID management
  ○ Show user ID instead of first name where possible.
  ○ Stopped displaying first name on computer lock screens and task bars
● Added Mx. option to giving forms and made honorifics optional
● Began to update our style guides
● Promoted ORCID as a gender-inclusive scholarly identifier*
More universities need to make retroactive name changes on theses & dissertations for trans graduates happen with no gatekeeping and no insulting questions. If we can't take ownership over our scholarly output, what's the point? No, ORCID is not an answer.
Gender-inclusive language

Radical copyeditor:

- Use singular “they”
- Recognize that there are more than two genders
- Avoid the language of gender opposites
- Decouple anatomy from identity
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Instead of doing this on the web...</th>
<th>Do this:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Asking for binary gender on a form | ● Remove the option altogether unless you absolutely need it  
● Add “other” and “prefer not to say” options  
● Ask for pronouns instead |
| Listing only honorifics like Mr./Mrs./Ms./Miss | Add Mx. to the list, or stop using honorifics |
| “He/she” | “They” |
| “Men and women” “ladies and gentlemen” “boys and girls” | “People” “folks” “colleagues” “esteemed guests” “children” “students” “humans” “y’all” “all y’all” |
| “Both genders” “the opposite sex” | “All genders” “another gender” |
| “Preferred pronoun” “Preferred name” | “Pronoun” “Name” |
| “Gender-neutral” | “Gender-inclusive” |
| Using whatever stock photos you have | Make sure your photography represents many kinds of diversity |
Lingering questions

● What would it look like for our users to have **full control** over which name is used in which systems?
● What guidelines/procedures should we have in place for folks who are deadnamed in our digital archives and scholarly repositories?
● How do we as librarians help or hinder discussions about trans folks, names and the scholarly record?
● What’s the library’s role in coordinating with institutional technology staff to implement identity management changes thoughtfully?
● What did our workgroup completely miss in our report?
● How can our library be **proactively affirming** of trans identities rather than **reactively accommodating**?
Thanks!
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Toward a gender-inclusive workplace

- Bathrooms, y’all.
  - Toilets, signage, waste bins, vending, privacy.

- Allyship 101
  - Pronouns, training in DEI, ongoing conversations
  - Acknowledge and affirm intersections

- HR support
  - Names of use, name changes, health benefits

- Code of conduct / community guidelines
  - [Recurse user's manual](#) focuses on norming good behavior.
  - You can’t change hearts and minds but you can change policy. (Inspired by S. Cunningham)

- Inclusive recruitment strategies

- Continuous improvement
Inclusive style guides

- Conscious style guide dot com
- 18F’s inclusive language guide
- An Incomplete Guide to Inclusive Language for Startups and Tech
- Writing inclusive documentation
- Trans glossary from GLAAD
- Transgender style guide
Further resources

- VCU Libraries Gender-Inclusive Workgroup Report
- Letter: Coming out as nonbinary at work
- Trans-inclusive design at A List Apart
- Trans Allyship Workbook
- Trans* studies in higher education syllabus

I have so many recommendations. Just ask!