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Statement Purpose

The University of Michigan Library’s Website Redesign Project espouses and elevates principles of diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility (DEIA) in its efforts to provide an intuitive platform for finding and using U-M Library tools, resources, and expertise. The Web Presence Steering Committee (WPSC), which serves as the charging committee for the Website Redesign Project Team (WRPT), has developed the following DEIA Statement for the project, in order to document and share our general approach to elevating DEIA principles. Our goal is to ensure that DEIA principles inform and accompany all stages of the website redesign project.

This plan is intended to represent components of our work within WPSC and WRPT that address DEIA. The document will continue to evolve as the website redesign project moves forward.

Team Structure and Engagement

We describe our values and efforts to develop and maintain equitable working practices in the following sections.
Team Norms and Project Charter

The Website Redesign Project Team maintains an integrated charter and norms document. In order to create and develop an equitable and inclusive atmosphere, the charter and norms promote transparency about the nature of the group’s work as well as the way in which the group works. This document applies to the Core Team as well as the five sub-teams.

Diversity of Membership

Along with our colleagues throughout the library, the WPSC aspires to achieve diverse membership within its own committee and subcommittees. We acknowledge that the WPSC and WRPT are not racially diverse as of the drafting of this statement (Spring 2019) and we will continue to seek and evaluate potential opportunities to diversify as the project progresses. We believe that diversity in all of its forms, including racial and gender diversity, is critical at every level of our organization, including the library leadership, library teams and departments, longer term library committees, and shorter term task forces. Committee formation in particular can be a complex process, with considerations for balancing necessary topical and domain expertise with representation from diverse backgrounds and/or library units. The WPSC also aspires to avoid tokenism and does not wish to contribute to the phenomena of taxing colleagues from underrepresented backgrounds with disproportionate service commitments or subjecting anyone to undue emotional labor.

Inclusive Communication: Internal Focus

The WPSC works closely with the WRPT on communication needs and planning. Both groups share documentation through the staff intranet, including charges, membership, presentation slides, past newsletter announcements, and reports from surveys, testing, and other information gathering efforts.

In order to communicate effectively and with broad appeal to all stakeholders, the WPSC and WRPT have envisioned many forms of communication with varying degrees of formality, designed to gather input as well as to disseminate information. Venues for communicating have included:

- ShareFest
- Public Services Communication Forum
- Senior Managers (now dissolved)
- Library Executive Council
- Library All Staff Meetings
- Special Topics Brown Bags
- Library Newsletter

1 At this stage of the website redesign project, communication planning has focused on internal needs. External communication planning is forthcoming.
- Library All Staff Emails
- Library-wide website listening tour (conversations held with departments and groups)
- Library-wide workshops at multiple library locations

Additionally, and with explicit emphasis on inclusivity, the WPSC recommended developing a semi-formal group of library colleagues to serve as Website Champions, with the specific goal of enabling and facilitating transparent communication throughout the Library and throughout the duration of the project. Recognizing that it is common for informal networks to develop within complex organizations, often reflecting and reinforcing existing power and connectedness structures, this effort seeks to intentionally build an information network that invites people in, plans for and enhances information sharing efforts, and prioritize diverse membership.

**User-Focused Methods and Practices**

User Research and Usability Testing

User research activities are structured to learn about the full range of user needs required for the design process. One of the sub-teams is devoted to UX research and design. Research and testing activities are designed to facilitate understanding across a range of user backgrounds, needs, and use cases. We take intentional steps to ensure that testing our tools and resources engages with a broad range of users that reflect the diversity of our user community. We also regularly recruit users who interact with the U-M Services for Students with Disabilities or the Knox Center for usability testing in order to ensure our digital resources are not only compliant with published accessibility standards but also usable for users with a range of disabilities and access needs.

Persona Development

For the WRPT, our aim was to develop user personas as diverse as our user base. Backing our work was research from the Library Lifecycle and User Profiles Project, a research and service design project conducted from December 2017 to August 2018. As part of this project, the team conducted 30 contextual interviews about campus experience with 14 current undergrads, 3 recent undergrad alumni, 5 PhD candidates, 3 grad students, 3 staff, and 2 lecturers in the health sciences, natural sciences, business, humanities, social sciences and architecture.

The data from this project revealed doorways of understanding into the multi-layered, intersectional way that folks experience U-M, as well as where their personal and professional goals overlap and influence each other and the choices they make on their academic journey. With this rich data, we were able to create core persona groups that share common goals and needs, but which also reflect personal paths and experiences of how people perceive or interact with the library and its services, resources, and spaces. We are committed to broadening our understanding of user needs and behaviors through further research and collaborations and to
expanding our persona library to reflect our growing awareness. We will also hold interactive information sessions and workshops on the personas and other user research commitments.

Accessibility for Everyone
The U-M Library website is a vital infrastructure that must be accessible to users of all backgrounds, ages, and abilities. One of the sub-teams is devoted to accessibility. With that, accessibility considerations and practicing the principles of universal design are built into the project from its earliest stages.

The site will be built using the U-M Library Design System. In creating and sustaining the Design System, we are committed to the latest WCAG 2 AA standards (currently WCAG 2.1 AA) and aim to ensure everything we design and build is perceivable, operable, understandable, and robust. In addition, accessibility callouts are featured throughout the Design System to highlight accessibility considerations that are built in to the code.

Working collaboratively with the library’s Digital Accessibility Team (DAT) is also critical in conducting accessibility audits, evaluations, and tests throughout the design and development of the new website. Additionally, accessibility is one of the metrics we are using in our Assessment Plan to measure improvements between the legacy site against the redesigned site.

Further, our Editorial Style Guide and Best Practices, which guides content creation, demonstrates a central commitment to writing well for the web. Good web writing practices also promote accessible content creation. Everything from keeping content simple and short, using lists to break up text, writing meaningful link copy, and using headings properly, contributes to accessibility and readability for all audiences.

Inclusive Content
Inclusive language is part of the Writing Guidelines in our Style Guide with a section dedicated to strategies for being inclusive. We are committed to writing with gender neutral terms whenever possible, including using the singular "they" to refer to a hypothetical individual, or an individual whose gender is not known. And we work to remain cognizant of slang, idioms, and internal jargon that may be confusing to readers, including those for whom English is not their first language.

We also want to ensure that library staff have flexibility in how they describe themselves and are presented through their staff profiles. With that, we are conducting a needs analysis around profile fields and plan to add an optional preferred pronoun field.

Images make up a significant part of our website, as well. We aim to choose images that represent the diversity of our campus community, while being careful and respectful when using
images of people, and are cognizant that our image choices reflect the values of our organization. Our voice is welcoming and that must extend to images.

Equitable Access
We are aware that not all of our users have access to high speed networks, wi-fi, or smartphones. It’s important that our site is built with modern technology solutions that enable quick page loads, and works with a variety of devices and web browsers. This includes using responsive design, which adjusts the display to the size of your screen, and GatsbyJS. We have also intentionally included planning for and reviewing the mobile experience and site performance of our website in our Assessment Plan.

Resources

- Principles of Inclusion from University of Victoria (addresses committee formation specifically)