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# A Glossary for an Inclusive Library

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*“Get ready to get uncomfortable. Get ready to look at a different point of view,  
a different perspective. Get ready to think differently.”*  
– a *Serving Communities* library director

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*“...Serving Communities Framework and Curriculum helped me focus on a path that serves the community best, [to improve services] to portions of the community that I am not already serving, that we could really expand our service and really incorporate services to underserved communities and people.”*

— a *Serving Communities* library director



**Cornerstones  
of Science**

awakening curiosity, enriching lives



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Learning Innovation**



**CT State Library**

Preserving the Past. Informing the Future.



**Idaho  
Commission  
for Libraries**



**Maryland  
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**WebJunction**

# SERVING COMMUNITIES CURRICULUM

## Overview

The *Serving Communities Curriculum* seeks, for you and your library staff, to:

1. enhance state, public, and county library leadership skills and competencies to intentionally plan for and provide equitable, culturally-responsive library services and resources for all members of the community with special focus on underserved community members that are not currently using the library; and
2. foster the co-development of these services and resources in partnership with government, community leaders, and organizations dedicated to addressing community issues affecting the lives of all community members.

The *Serving Communities Curriculum*, the *Serving Communities Framework*, and the *Serving Communities: A Glossary for an Inclusive Library* are the result of a two-year program funded by the Institute of Museum and Library Services (imls.gov). Together, these materials provide library directors and leadership staff with the information they need to be actively aware and purposeful in co-creating equitable culturally-responsive library services and programs with vulnerable, underserved community member groups. A focus is on presenting actionable science information that is meaningful to adult learners in the community. (These materials are online at [www.webjunction.org](http://www.webjunction.org) and [www.cornerstonesofscience.org](http://www.cornerstonesofscience.org).)

## Actionable Science-based Community Issues

As you consider the *Serving Communities Framework*, *Serving Communities: A Glossary for an Inclusive Library* and the supporting modules, all of these materials are designed to help you be actively aware and purposeful for creating equitable access to actionable science information and services responsive to community needs, particularly to underserved communities who do not or are unable to access your library. To succeed at broadening community participation, an inclusion-centered library leader needs to also broaden their skills, attitudes and practices. This includes:

1. developing a shared language with community member groups;
2. knowing your audience and understanding their reticence to the library and their distrust of “science;” and

3. even within the library’s financial and staff constraints, through partnerships, willingness and interest, prioritizing equitable access to actionable science information and services that are relevant and needed by community member groups.

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*“The **Framework** is a self-assessment tool.*

*You are able to determine where you are and chart a path for personal improvements.”*

*– a **Serving Communities** library director*

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## Serving Communities Framework for Library Directors

The *Serving Communities Framework* for library directors is a resource for state, public, and county library directors and leadership staff. It supports your work to:

1. determine your current inclusion-centered attitudes and practices;
2. visualize your aspirations for yourselves (as inclusion-centered leaders), your library, and your community; and
3. develop your path forward for creating a more inclusion-centered library.

The *Serving Communities Framework* identifies the skills and competencies that library directors need to create a library that is responsive to community well-being (especially for people that are underserved). Library leaders need to be confident and have the skills to build a coalition of community members that is able to co-create actionable science-based programs and services for adult learners that are relevant and needed by them.

Supporting the *Serving Communities Framework* are five modules designed to enhanced your inclusion-centered skills, attitudes, and practices. They include:

**Module 1:** Personal Inclusion-centered Leadership Practices Module

**Module 2:** Inclusion-centered Leadership Practices in Library Organizational Culture Module

**Module 3:** Inclusion-centered Leadership Practices in Building Community Partnerships Module

**Module 4:** Inclusion-centered Leadership Practices in Community Member Experiences Module: Actionable Science Information for Adult Learners

**Module 5:** Creating a Shared Language Module: Putting the Glossary for an Inclusive Library into Action

# SERVING COMMUNITIES

## A FRAMEWORK FOR INCLUSION-CENTERED LIBRARY LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT



# INTRODUCTION

Language is a powerful tool that can draw us closer together or drive us further apart. Simply put, words matter. The words we all use are key to creating safe, inclusive, respectful, and welcoming library environments. By embracing inclusive language, we can communicate effectively in a diversifying society and globe.<sup>1</sup>

The *Serving Communities: A Glossary for an Inclusive Library* was developed as a part of the *Serving Communities: A Framework for Inclusion-centered Library Leadership Development (Serving Communities Framework)* for the Institute for Museum and Library Services project (Grant number RE-250085-OLS-21). It is designed to infuse the principles of equity, diversity, inclusion, and access into the language and communications library directors and staff use on a daily basis.

To effect change, one must acknowledge that language is powerful, and use it as a tool for creating inclusion and access. We seek to raise awareness, guide learning, and support the use of culturally sensitive terms and phrases that center the voices and perspectives of those that are often underserved or stereotyped by a library. The *Serving Communities: A Glossary for an Inclusive Library* also identifies some problematic terms and buzzwords, and offers suitable alternatives or more contemporary replacements.

## WHY

The words we use are key to creating safe, inclusive, respectful and welcoming environments and relationships. The *Serving Communities: A Glossary for an Inclusive Library* can serve as a guide and starting point for positively engaging in difficult conversations. It's a resource to ensure everyone is on the same page while engaging in the process of examining gaps in equity, inclusion, and access. Intentional use of respectful language begins to create trust, respect, and the genuine collaboration needed to co-develop library services and programs.

## WHO

This *Glossary* is for library directors that want to be inclusion-centered leaders with their staff, partners, and the diverse groups in their communities. These internal and external dialogues are critical if daily actions and operational decision-making are relevant and a true reflection of the community's wants, needs, and aspirational goals.

## HOW

The *Serving Communities: A Glossary for an Inclusive Library* is a guide on how to increase awareness, understanding, and intentional use of

language and words. It explores culturally insensitive words commonly used within the library community that intentionally/unintentionally marginalize people. The *Serving Communities: A Glossary for an Inclusive Library* is designed to draw attention to these words and the harmful practice of lumping groups of people together out of convenience, thus denying individuals the respect and recognition of their own identity.

## WHAT

The *Serving Communities: A Glossary for an Inclusive Library* draws directly from numerous amazing resources and thought leaders in the informal science, library, diversity/equity/inclusion, and social justice communities. The definitions used in the *Serving Communities: A Glossary for an Inclusive Library* are based on:

1. current use in library and government lexicons;
2. research and professional development usage;
3. current cultural, geographic and regional perspectives; and,
4. the context of the development and implementation of the *Serving Communities Framework*.

This *Glossary* is not a comprehensive set of definitions. Rather the words we define are ones that relate directly to the work of the library engaging diverse community groups and organizations. In addition, the *Serving Communities: A Glossary for an Inclusive Library* is designed to call attention to the words that continue to inhibit inclusion-centered library leadership, spaces, services, and policies. Our use of the correct words is the first step to affecting positive equitable change within library institutions.

The *Serving Communities: A Glossary for an Inclusive Library* along with the *Serving Communities Framework* and the *Serving Communities Curriculum* were developed over a two-year period (2021-2023). They provide tools and resources especially for library directors and their leadership teams that:

1. nurture the practices, attitudes, and policies that provide the basis of community inclusion through collaboration and co-development of library services with community partners and members; and,
2. focus on providing on-demand, actionable science information adult learners can access that is culturally responsive to family and community well-being.

The *Serving Communities: A Glossary for an Inclusive Library* explains the origins of problematic terms and phrases and offers alternatives or more current replacements. The *Serving Communities: A Glossary for an Inclusive Library* is iterative in nature, continuing to evolve as new words emerge and/or current language becomes obsolete. The *Serving Communities: A Glossary for an Inclusive Library* is broken into the following sections:

### Section 1: Community Engagement Terms and Language

These are words derived from the development and implementation of the *Serving Communities Framework*, professional development activities, and this *Glossary*.

### Section 2: Science Terms and Language

The term “science” means something different to library staff and community partners as well as to culturally- and ethnically-diverse community groups. As a result, the *Serving Communities: A Glossary for an Inclusive Library* outlines the various definitions and use of the

term “science.” Library staff needs to be aware of these different perspectives and be intentional in developing a shared understanding and way to describe how “science” is used within your programs and services.

### Section 3: Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Power Terms and Language

This section describes words and phrases that are commonly used within the library community that may be harmful, threatening, pejorative, or disrespectful to cultural and ethnic groups within your community. Since we need to be more intentional and purposeful in our language, we need to become more mindful of the words we use as a way to advance inclusion and access.

### Section 4: Person-First and Identity-First Language

These words promote awareness and mindfulness that every person, regardless of cultural or ethnic background, needs to be recognized in a respectful and equal way.



## Concept Terms, Identity-related Terms, and Words of Convenience/Buzzwords

Further distinctions within the words and language we commonly use are highlighted in Sections 3 and 4. These distinctions provide cultural background and context for library directors, including:

1. Guidance on the use of the word, both in a written and spoken context;
2. Suggested alternatives;
3. Comments on use and other supporting information; and,
4. Associated reference(s) for each word, definition, and supporting information. Further distinctions include:

### Concept Terms

Concept terms are words and phrases that describe general terms related to diversity, equity, inclusion, access, and power as well as terms, jargon, and phrases that describe science, technology, engineering, and math.

### Identity-related Terms

Identity-related terms are words and phrases that directly relate to how each person self-identifies, and

wants to be referred to and recognized (e.g., Black, Hispanic/Latino(as)/Chicano(as)/Mexican American, Chinese American, Indigenous Americans).

### Words of Convenience/Buzzwords

A word of convenience, or buzzword, is a word or phrase which is jargon and is fashionable at a particular time or in a particular context but the use of which unintentionally causes harm and is disrespectful. For example, “*BIPOC*” and “*underserved*.” These terms, out of convenience, lump multiple cultural and ethnic groups together and fail to allow that individual to assert their own identity and be recognized in a respectful manner. More importantly, these words, in some instances, are not how cultural and ethnic groups identify themselves. Libraries pride themselves on respectfully serving people. Doing that requires ongoing awareness of language and the currency of terms and descriptors. These words exemplify the need for continued awareness and dialogue.

# Using the SERVING COMMUNITIES: A Glossary for an Inclusive Library

## Our Language Needs To Evolve

The *Serving Communities: A Glossary for an Inclusive Library* is a start to finding our inclusion-centered voices that acknowledge, encourage and empower all members of the community to use the library as a valued community resource that serves all. Though the *Serving Communities: A Glossary for an Inclusive Library* was developed with a diverse team, we recognize that it is a static document that may not adequately reflect current thinking, feeling, and knowledge around identity and respect. That's the point. Use of language as a tool to create inclusion **IS** an on-going process. Our challenge to the library community is to continue to build upon this *Serving Communities: A Glossary for an Inclusive Library*, to revise and add to our current understanding of inclusion-centered language in order to make it more relevant and reflect the diversity of the library community and communities they serve.

## Power and Privilege

Power and privilege are rooted in the word choices we make. You, as library directors within your communities and institutions, hold power and privilege. That thought might be uncomfortable for some. However, every decision about word choices, how words are used, and to whom the words are reflective demonstrate your power and privilege. The *Serving Communities: A Glossary for an Inclusive Library* is useful for redirecting power and privilege to empower and lift up the community.

## Don't Stop Talking

Our experience is that library directors may struggle to find and use the right words. We know that our life experiences affect how we hear and respond to each other. Active listening, getting comfortable with uncomfortable discussions, and having the ability to learn from these interactions will help you build the shared language needed to create diverse inclusion-centered partnerships with community members, staff, and organizations.

## Serving Communities: Sustainable Inclusion-Centered Library Leadership Practices Framework

The companion document to this *Glossary* is the *Serving Communities Framework*. They seek to build the capacity, attitudes, and practices of library directors and senior management to create an inclusion-centered library that offers access to actionable science information to adults. An important skill for you, the library director, is effectively communicating with library staff, community partners, government agencies, and diverse community members. Language builds trust, respect, and the ability to actively listen to community groups who are not using the library and are unable to access critical information and services.

## Serving Communities: A Glossary for an Inclusive Library, and Creating a Shared Language Module: Putting the Glossary for an Inclusive Library into Action

This *Glossary* provides a starting point for positively engaging in difficult conversations. The accompanying *Module* contains three worksheets. These worksheets and activities are designed for you and your staff to increase your awareness of:

1. how you use language;
2. how the unintentional/intentional harm and promotion of power that comes with word choices;
3. how you can create a shared language that is reflective of the library and all of its community; and,
4. how to get comfortable with uncomfortable conversations through active listening.



# SECTION 1

## Community Engagement Terms and Language

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*“Helped me listen and observe staff and their interactions with people. Helped us be more conscious on how to describe people, how we stereotype and question why we refer to people the way we do.*

*Thinking about “who am I missing.”*

– a **Serving Communities** library director

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## ADULT LEARNERS

Adults learn differently than youth. Adults are driven by more self-directed learning balancing daily commitments, time constraints, interests, and access. Motivations of the adult learners include: self-concept, adult learner experience, readiness to learn, orientation to learning, and motivation to learning.<sup>3</sup>

## BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS: STAGE 3

Building Relationships refers to the steps required by interested groups to connect social structures with diverse interested parties to promote the access of science information and services to marginalized communities. Community engagement is defined by the various aspects of relationship building and the components that lead to community mobilization and goals.

**Step 1:** Speaking a shared language, with all interested parties having a shared goal.

**Step 2:** Building rapport with community members in order to establish trustworthy relationships. Library directors and leadership must meet people where they are, and not be afraid to work on a small-scale, individual basis.

**Step 3:** Offering community members opportunities to voice their opinions to improve public services.

**Step 4:** Holding regular interpersonal communication with local leaders, including government officials, school boards, law enforcement and other public service members, nonprofits, local businesses, and religious organizations.

**Step 5:** Engaging in community mobilization that puts these valuable relationships to good use. Community mobilization is at the core of librarianship, and seeks to connect local residents with public resources.<sup>7</sup>

## COMMUNITY(IES)

**Definition 1** — People living in a particular geographic area including street, town, and county

**Definition 2** — A body of people that have a common history or common social, economic, ethnic, cultural and political interests, beliefs, and/or languages

### Recommendation

It is of particular importance to use “communities” to recognize the rich heritages and backgrounds of diverse cultural and ethnic people simply as groups or populations.

## COMMUNITY ANCHORS

Institutions that are place-based entities such as libraries, universities, and hospitals. They are tied to their surroundings by mission, invested capital, relationships to customers and community that link institutional well-being to that of the community in which it is located.<sup>4</sup>

## COMMUNITY CATALYST

Entities that contribute significantly to the quality of life, education, economy, and cohesion within their communities.<sup>4</sup>

## COMMUNITY-BASED ORGANIZATION

Non-profits that serve targeted populations within a community — including people who are low-income or homeless, populations with disabilities, or people from specific ethnic cultures.<sup>4</sup>

## COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Public library directors, community outreach and engagement coordinators and library staff often look for ways to broaden public participation. There are three stages to developing library services and programs that encourage specific community groups to participate in and/or engage with the library:

1. Community Outreach;
2. **Community Engagement;** and
3. Building Relationships.

## COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT: STAGE 2

Community engagement requires two-way communication with broader participation and wider community input in decision-making. Through deliberate, well-planned public engagement, community members become informed about, participate in, co-develop, and influence public library policies, services, and programs. Engaged community members go beyond just receiving and/or knowing about a pending decision to participating in the decision-making process—they become a part of the community change. The engagement process includes listening, discussion, deliberation, and decision-making. Successful community engagement begins to build relationships in the community which, ultimately, strengthens the community's social fabric and develops new leaders.

## COMMUNITY ISSUES

Community issues are problems or concerns that a community (town, neighborhood, or other community group) has. Community Issues are complex with four major factors that contribute to community challenges. These include:

**Personal Cultural Factors and Values** Differences are arguably the most destructive community challenge. Religion, politics, lifestyle preferences, dietary preferences, how to raise kids, pets, etc. can all be areas where people passionately differ in their opinions and perspectives;

**Economic Factors** Individuals and families with limited financial resources that are unable to fully participate in their community;

**Political Factors** Examples include government regulations and policies, community leadership, and local politics, such as decision-making powers;

**Accessibility Factors** Examples include limited

transportation and internet options, physical mobility, service delivery, and time constraints that limit participation in community activities.

### Community Issues

Examples of community issues are the effects of the opioid epidemic on families, poverty, degraded air or water quality, impacts of climate change on public health, disaster preparedness and response, and community safety.<sup>5</sup>

**See *Serving Communities Framework* Dimension IV, Competency 3 on page 22.**

## COMMUNITY MEMBERS

A combination of diverse groups of people living together in same the town/county/state. Living in a community is not a natural consequence of having equitable access and recognition to services provided by public institutions in that community.

*Community members* is a specific term identified and used by public institutions and services (including public libraries). It should be actively recognized that all individuals are members of a community and therefore should be engaged by public institutions to understand and provide everyone the same rights to access those services and institutions.<sup>2</sup>

**See *Serving Communities Framework* Dimension III, Competency 1 on page 17.**

## COMMUNITY OUTREACH

Public library directors, community outreach and engagement coordinators and library staff often look for ways to broaden public participation. There are three stages to developing library services and programs that encourage specific community groups to participate in and/or engage with the library:

1. **Community Outreach;**
2. Community Engagement; and
3. Building Relationships.

Community Outreach is primarily a one-way communication strategy that tells community members about upcoming programming and services and only developed by library staff without input from those who the program or service is intended for. It can be a good way to inform the public and an important first step inviting them in to comment or participate.

## COMMUNITY PARTNERS

It is an external entity that has shared interests with a library and actively contributes to library programs

and services. They build two-way relationships and work cooperatively on shared goals that address community concerns. Public library directors, community engagement and outreach managers and library staff associate with, collaborate and build strategic alliances with individuals that represent a diverse set of cultural, scientific, academic and local/regional governmental agencies, institutions, organizations, and cultural associations. It is the building of these relationships that expands and extends a library's reach and services and broader participation by all community members.

## COMMUNITY WELL-BEING

The combination of social, economic, environmental, cultural, and political conditions identified by individuals and their communities as essential for them to flourish and fulfill their potential.

## LIBRARY LEADERS

They are library professionals that have the skills to be innovative and successful facilitators of change. They can effectively address internal organizational operations as well as external community needs. Ideal qualities include empathy, vision, communication, and flexibility. These leaders may include the library director, senior management, and staff.

The focuses are specifically on library directors, management and leadership teams who explicitly make and are responsible for the "operational decisions" including the allocation of staff and financial resources. They set the vision and direction of the library services as well as empower their staff to serve in leadership capacities.

**See *Serving Communities Framework* Dimension II, Competency 1 on page 14.**

## LIBRARY MANAGEMENT

Library directors, management and leadership teams who explicitly make and are responsible for the "operational decisions" including the allocation of staff and financial resources, set the vision and direction of the library services as well as empower their staff to serve in leadership capacities as well.

## ON-DEMAND LEARNING

On-demand learning allows, particularly adults, to educate themselves at their own pace. The individual decides what content they want to know more about and when it is most convenient for them. The library can be the place for all members of the community to access this information.<sup>5</sup>

## OPERATIONALIZE

To put something into practice.

The goal is to nurture library directors' abilities to use and apply an inclusion-centered lens for budget, resources, policy decisions, processes, and collecting data [within the library institution].

**See *Serving Communities Framework Dimension II, Competency 2* on page 15.**

## SAFE SPACE

A place intended to be free of bias, conflict, criticism, or potentially threatening actions, ideas, or conversations<sup>7</sup>

## SUSTAINABILITY

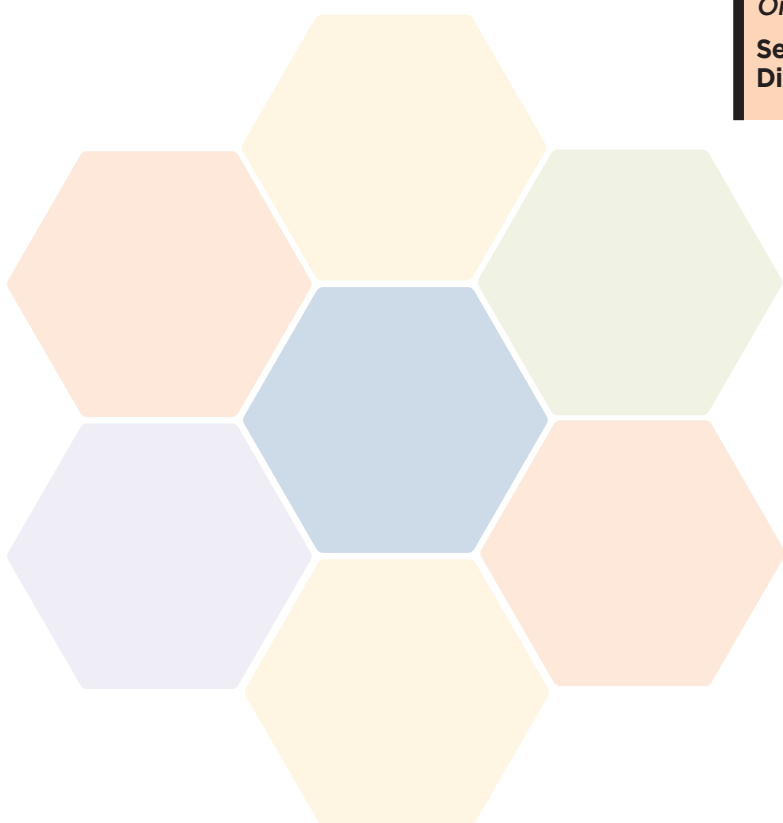
Sustainability is capacity of an organization to maintain or support a process over time. It has three core concepts: economic, environmental, and social

## OUTWARD-FACING

“Turning outward” is a step-by-step process developed by The Harwood Institute for Public Innovation. It entails taking steps to better understand communities; changing processes and thinking to make conversations more community-focused; being proactive to community issues; and putting community aspirations first.<sup>6</sup>

***Serving Communities Library Goal Setting Action Plan*** template focuses on the durability of partnerships, community member accessibility, and ongoing support of inclusion-centered library services. (*Serving Communities: Dimension II: Inclusion-centered Leadership Practices in Library Organizational Culture Module.*)

**See *Serving Communities Framework Dimension III, Competency 3* on page 19.**



## Reflection Questions



1. What terms do we use to refer to the various communities we serve or wish to serve? (e.g., on the Web, in program flyers, in library communications)?
2. In what ways can I/we get feedback on the use of the terms we currently use?
3. How might our library discuss the terms we use, terms we want to use, or changes we want to make with others within our library?

## SECTION 2

# Science Terms and Language

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*“We have an obligation, particularly as the library,  
to treat people as they wanted to be treated.”*

– a *Serving Communities* library director

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## ACTIONABLE COMMUNITY-BASED SCIENCE LEARNING

Adults can immediately learn and act on issues affecting their lives and/or community (e.g., water quality, health and wellness, and resource allocation or finances). Community-based, actionable science learning is predicated on the assumption that adults have access to on-demand information, resources, and services from the library that are easily understood, relevant and provide outlined steps and supports for adults to take that action or next steps.<sup>2</sup>

## COMMUNITY SCIENCE

Community science is led by the community. They choose whether to engage with scientific experts. The context in which community science emerges is strongly associated with the social-ecological system (SES) in which a community is embedded, including a set of shared beliefs, a strong connection to place and the self-organizing properties of the community from which interative social learning arises.<sup>8</sup>

## FREE-CHOICE LEARNING

Free-choice learning is the learning people do every day throughout their lives not because they have to but because they want to. It describes the non-linear, self-directed learning that occurs when individuals have primary responsibility for determining the what, when, where, how, why and with whom of learning.<sup>9</sup>

## INFORMAL SCIENCE

Informal science refers to experiential life-long learning opportunities for the public, in unstructured, self-directed

learning environments (e.g., libraries, museums, homes) to engage in science, technology, engineering and math-based learning experiences of interest to the individual.

## STEM

An acronym that stands for science, technology, engineering and math, primarily used in formal education contexts and structured experiences for youth. The “cultural norms of STEM”—that is, the accepted patterns of practice that make up the standard ways of speaking, participating, learning, and working in STEM—can diminish engagement among those who don’t fit the “norm.” The dominant cultural norms of STEM are established by the populations that have historically participated in and institutionalized STEM—that is, male, white, western, and privileged.

## SCIENCE

Science is the pursuit and application of knowledge and understanding of the natural and social world following a systematic methodology based on evidence.

The focus of the *Serving Communities Framework* and the professional development materials that accompany the *Serving Communities: A Glossary for an Inclusive Library* is on understanding that cultural and ethnic community member perspectives are central to co-creating inclusive, culturally-responsive information, services, and resources. They empower adult learners to learn and act on a community issue (e.g., degraded water quality, public health problems, etc.)

**See *Serving Communities Framework* Dimension II, Competency 2 on page 15.**

## Cultural Perspectives/Issues with the Word

- Librarians and directors see STEM as focused on youth programs, story times and/or Maker Spaces
- State and public library leaders do not use words like STEM/Science to describe adult learning or strategic issues such as public health. All refer to STEM/Science issues as “community” issues.
- Most people do not use the word science within the context of their daily lives. Rather they just do it (amateur astronomers, low rider groups, etc).
- There is distrust and lack of interest/confidence (seen as formal school experiences where *science* is related to school experiences.
- There are cultural and ethnic groups that have been historically harmed by “science”<sup>9,10</sup> and therefore they are distrusting.
- STEM is a western Eurocentric term and process that doesn’t value or integrate other cultural and ethnic groups views and perspectives. As a result, some cultural and ethnic groups do not recognize the term “science” in the same way.

## Alternative Language/Recommendation

- For adult learners, the intent is not about highlighting that they are using/learning “science.” Rather the emphasis is on their ability to access, learn, and be able to apply the information to address something that impacts the quality of their lives and that of their families .

## Word of Convenience/Buzzword

- STEM (science, technology, engineering and math) is a buzzword and means different things to different groups. As a result, use of the word STEM/science, for some cultural and ethnic groups, may be an unintentional barrier to access and participation.”
- Commonly used and accepted by the library community.

## SCIENCE-BASED COMMUNITY ISSUES

Science-based community issues are community-wide and local issues negatively impacting populations of a community, particularly marginalized groups.

## SERVING COMMUNITIES

The intentional focus for library directors and staff, when *Serving Communities*, is on women, underrepresented cultural/ethnic groups, persons with disabilities and other marginalized cultural or socioeconomically disadvantaged groups. These groups continue to have limited access to equitable, inclusive, and culturally responsive library and community programs, services and resources. have the access and opportunities equitable, inclusive and culturally responsive experiences, training and resources, in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics within, in, and out of school as well as in pursuit of careers in those fields.

*Serving Communities* is defined as state and public libraries having the capacities and abilities to deliver equitable, inclusive, and culturally responsive library services in partnership with local government and leaders that address science-based issues of concern to local community members, particularly those from marginalized and underrepresented groups.

See *Serving Communities Framework* Dimension III, Competency 3 on page 19.

## STEM LITERACY

STEM literacy is the knowledge and understanding of scientific and mathematical concepts and processes required for personal decision making, participation in civic and cultural affairs, and economic productivity.<sup>10</sup>

Public and state library leadership recognize that STEM Literacy must accommodate today's rapidly changing circumstances of where and why people understand and use STEM tools and concepts. The unique social and cultural realities in which individuals live, and the diversity of outcomes that an ever-expanding set of learning modalities and motivations afford will be important to the acceptance and use of science based information and resources.<sup>11</sup> Specific constructs include:

1. The engagement of individuals in relevant STEM topics useful to them and to the communities in which they live (an asset-based, bottom-up, community and culturally responsive approach).
2. STEM literacy does not mean that a person already knows how to solve a problem, but that they have the capacity to acquire the information and skills to work towards a solution.
3. STEM literacy is a goal that provides both individuals and communities with the necessary understanding and skills to be successful citizens in a STEM-oriented 21st century world.
4. STEM literacy acknowledges and fully accommodates the diversity of personal lived experiences and realities that influence what an individual knows and what they need to know in order to successfully advocate for healthier communities.
5. Libraries offer the ideal infrastructure to create equitable, inclusive access and culturally responsive support to increase an individual and collective capacity for informed decision-making that improves lives and livelihoods.

See *Serving Communities Framework* Dimension IV, Competency 3 on page 22.



## Reflection Questions



1. What terms do we use to refer to the various communities we serve or wish to serve? (e.g., on the Web, in program flyers, in library communications)?
2. In what ways can I/we get feedback on the use of the terms we currently use?
3. How might our library discuss the terms we use, terms we want to use, or changes we want to make with others within our library?

## SECTION 3

# Concept Terms and Language Related to Equity and Power

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*“The **Glossary** generated conversations with staff early on, particularly the words of convenience and buzzwords.”*

– a **Serving Communities** library director

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## ACCESS

The elimination of discrimination and other barriers that contribute to inequitable opportunities to join and be a part of a work groups, organization, or community.<sup>13</sup>

## ACCESSIBILITY

Accessibility refers to the physical, mental and social barriers to participation which are equally important to address when creating welcoming and inclusive environments for all people regardless of their disability or lived experience. We must consider to go beyond “compliance, acknowledge and find solutions for those barriers including socioeconomic, education history, race and culture, and physical and mental disabilities. The practice of accessibility happens when different voices are included in the decision-making process and encourages us to build accessible spaces that benefit not just some, but all.<sup>14</sup>

## ADVOCACY

The act or process of supporting a cause or proposal.<sup>15</sup>

## AFFIRM

To acknowledge, respect, value, and support someone’s full identity and self—including race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, experiences, ideas, beliefs, etc.—and to encourage the development and exploration of who they are.<sup>16</sup>

## ALLY

People who recognize the unearned privilege they receive from society’s patterns of injustice and take responsibility for changing these patterns. Being an ally is more than being sympathetic and feeling bad for those who experience discrimination. An ally is willing to act with, and for, others in pursuit of ending oppression and creating equality. Real allies are willing to step out of their comfort zones. Those who decide to undertake the ally role must recognize and understand the power and privileges that one receives, accepts, and experiences, and they use that position to act for justice.<sup>1</sup>

## ANTI-BLACK RACISM

Any attitude, behavior, practice, or policy that explicitly or implicitly reflects the belief that Black people are inferior to another racial group. Anti-Black racism is reflected in interpersonal, institutional, and systemic levels of racism and is a function of White supremacy.

## ANTI-RACISM

Active process of identifying and challenging racism, by changing systems, organizational structures, policies and practices, and attitudes, to redistribute power in an equitable manner.

## BIAS

American Psychological Association defines bias as partiality: an inclination or predisposition for or against

something. Motivational and cognitive biases are two main categories studied in decision-making analysis. Motivational biases are conclusions drawn due to self-interest, social pressures, or organization-based needs, whereas cognitive biases are judgments that go against what is considered rational, and some of these are attributed to implicit reasoning.<sup>1</sup>

## CLASSISM

The institutional, cultural, and individual set of practices and beliefs that assign differential value to people according to their socioeconomic status. Classism also refers to the systematic oppression of poor and working-class people by those who control resources.

## COLOR-BLIND RACIAL IDEOLOGY

The belief that people should be regarded and treated as equally as possible, without regard to race or ethnicity.<sup>1</sup>

### Cultural Perspectives/Issues with the Word

While a color-blind racial ideology may seem to be a pathway to achieve equity, in reality, it:

1. invalidates the importance of peoples’ culture;
2. ignores the manifestations of racist policies which preserve the ongoing processes that maintain racial and ethnic stratification in social institutions.

### Alternative Language/Recommendation

Understand and celebrate that differences between people *do exist*, but that all people are important and deserve to be valued, treated fairly and with respect. As a library director, encourage yourself and staff to see how people of other races are treated, and to stand up for them when they are not treated fairly or kindly.

## CULTURAL COMPETENCE

The ability to understand, communicate with, and effectively interact with people across cultures. Grounded in the respect and appreciation of cultural differences, cultural competence is demonstrated in the attitudes, behaviors, practices, and policies of people, organizations, and systems.<sup>1</sup>

## CULTURAL HUMILITY

When one maintains an interpersonal stance that is open to individuals and communities of varying cultures, in relation to aspects of the cultural identity most important to the person. Cultural humility includes a life-long commitment to self-critique about differences in culture and a commitment to be aware of and actively mitigate power imbalances between cultures.<sup>1</sup>

**CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE**

Understanding and using culturally-significant learning styles that encourages participation and engagement, as co-developed and/or recommended by the members of cultural and ethnic groups, in order to develop and facilitate inclusion-centered library services.<sup>2</sup>

**DEIA**

Acronym for Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Accessibility.

**DEISJ**

Acronym for Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, Justice, and Accessibility

**DISENFRACTHISE**

To intentionally or unintentionally deprive people of their rights, privilege, power and access.

**DISCRIMINATION**

Discrimination is the unfair or prejudicial treatment of people and groups based on characteristics such as race, gender, age, or sexual orientation.

**SOCIOECONOMIC DISCRIMINATION**

Discrimination based on socioeconomic factors that may affect the quality of education and healthcare.

**DIVERSITY**

Intentional and meaningful composition of all people that considers intersectional identities which are composed of persona lived experiences in culture, background, demographics, psychographics, disabilities and more. This requires us to consider an array of perspectives and ideas, and to constantly examine and question the make-up of voices to ensure diverse perspectives are represented and that power is shared. We must also understand that people are not a monolith — race, gender, age, class, sexual orientation and other individual characteristics impact how people are viewed, understood, and treated. Diversity is relational and is measured based on the collective whole.<sup>14,25</sup>

**DOMINANT GROUP**

Not necessarily the majority, but the group within a society with the power, privilege, and social status to control and define societal resources and social, political, and economic systems and norms.

**EQUALITY**

The effort to treat everyone the same or to ensure that everyone has access to the same opportunities. However, only working to achieve equality ignores historical and structural factors that benefit some social groups and disadvantages other social groups in ways that create differential starting points.<sup>1</sup>

**EQUITY**

Equity is not synonymous with equality. Equity addresses imbalanced social structures and acknowledges that every person has different needs, lived experiences and opportunities and ensures all people receive the resources they need to be successful. This practice includes dismantling barriers within our social systems to build internal and external practices of anti-racism and allows us to redistribute power. Equity is built into the design of systems and processes that work to uphold the goals and actions of inclusion and diversity. Equity, therefore, means increasing diversity by ameliorating conditions of disadvantaged groups.<sup>14,25</sup>

**ETHNICITY**

Denotes groups that share a common identity-based ancestry, language, or culture.

**HOMOPHOBIA**

The fear, hatred of and/or discomfort with people who are attracted to members of the same gender. Homophobia occurs in a broader heterosexist social context that systematically disadvantages LGBTQIA2+ people and promotes and rewards anti-LGBTQIA2+ sentiment.<sup>1</sup>

**INEQUITY**

Inequity perpetuates and maintains the “status quo” of imbalance within social structures and does not acknowledge that every person has different needs, lived experiences and opportunities nor ensures all people receive the resources they need to be successful.

**IDENTITY**

The fact of being who or what a person is. A complex definition driven by the intersectionality of choices, values, beliefs, appearance, ethnicity, practices, habits, work, hobbies, friends, family, interests, to name a few.

**IMPLICIT BIAS**

A belief or attitude that affects our understanding, decision, and actions. It exists with and/or without our conscious awareness.<sup>1</sup>

**INCLUSION**

Inclusion is not a natural consequence of having a “diverse” group represented. It is an intentional active effort to design, invite, celebrate, and give space to diverse participation in all aspects of the organization’s work, including decision-making. It ensures equitable access to opportunities and resources for people who might otherwise be excluded or marginalized to enhance the quality of the human experience and empower each other. To be inclusive means that people are valued and respected for their whole selves and that they do not have to diminish their differences in order to belong.<sup>14,25</sup>

## INCLUSION-CENTERED LEADERSHIP

Inclusion-centered leadership requires intentional internal organization practices that result in the delivery of library programs and services to all members of a community. Library leadership integrates their lived experiences and sphere of influence to make operational decisions that produce equitable access to library resources for all.

## INDIVIDUAL/PERSONAL RACISM

An internalized bias that occurs when a person's beliefs, attitudes, fears, behaviors, and actions are both based on and driven by racial biases/ prejudices. Bigotry or discrimination by an individual based on race.<sup>1</sup>

## INSTITUTIONAL/SYSTEMIC RACISM

The practices that perpetuate racial disparities, uphold White supremacy, and serve to the detriment and harm of persons of color and keep them in negative cycles. Institutional/ systemic racism also refers to policies that generate different outcomes for persons of different race. These laws, policies, and practices are not necessary. They are not necessarily explicit in mentioning any racial group, but work to create advantages for White persons and disadvantages for people of color or other ethnic or cultural groups.<sup>1</sup>

## INTERPERSONAL RACISM

Occurs between individuals. It is when someone consciously or unconsciously employs or acts upon racist thoughts, in ways that perpetuate stereotypes and harms people.<sup>1</sup>

## INTERSECTIONALITY

Every individual possesses multiple identities and these identities comprise a whole and multi-faceted person. Each identity is representative of how each person experiences life in society. Each person has different and valid experiences, but the rights certain groups experience may not be equivalent to the rights experienced (or not experienced) by other groups."<sup>16</sup>

## MARGINALIZATION

The process that occurs when members of a dominant group relegate a particular group to the edge of society by not allowing them an active voice, identity, or place for the purpose of maintaining power.<sup>1</sup>

## MARGINALIZED

To relegate to an unimportant or powerless position within a society or group.

## MICROAGGRESSIONS

Verbal, behavioral, or environmental indignities, whether intentional or unintentional, that communicate or imply hostile or derogatory racial slights and insults.<sup>1</sup>

## MINORITY

Though the definition means groups that make up less than half the population of a country, the term is more than a mathematical description. Groups like LGBTQIA+, veterans or people with disabilities are not considered minorities. The term directly and explicitly refers to ethnic and racial groups. Because *minority* seeks to separate racial and ethnic groups into less powerful, atomized identities. In defining groups by their "smallness," it not only diminishes them, it erases solidarity between them.<sup>17</sup>

### Cultural Perspectives/Issues with the Word

The term minority can be considered pejorative as a person is describing a human being and more, specifically their identity, as lesser than someone else's identity.

### Alternative Language/Recommendation

Appropriate response is to ask individual and/ or group on how they want to be referred to.  
**Recommendation:** Need to stop perpetuating its use in our speech, manuscripts, reports, surveys, proposals, presentations, websites and in the names of organizations, conferences, and workshops. The term minority is not a permanent fixture of a group's identity. Consider not continuing to promote this position.

### Words of Convenience/Buzzwords

Commonly use within the library community but continues to perpetuate racial, power and privilege biases and microaggressions.

## OPPRESSION

A system of supremacy and discrimination for the benefit of a limited dominant group of people that perpetuates itself through differential treatment, ideological domination, and institutional control. Oppression reflects the inequitable distribution of current and historical structural and institutional power, where a socially constructed binary of a "dominant group" hoard power, wealth, and resources at the detriment of the many. It creates a lack of access, opportunity, safety, security, and resources for non-dominant populations.<sup>1</sup>

## POWER

Power is the ability to influence others to believe, behave, or adopt values as those in power desire. It is the ability to define, set, or change situations. Power can manifest as personal or collective self-determination.<sup>1</sup>

## PREJUDICE

A preconceived opinion or assumption about something or someone rooted in stereotypes, rather than reason or fact, leading to unfavorable bias or hostility toward another person or group of people.<sup>1</sup>

## PRIVILEGE

Unearned power that is afforded to some but not others based on status rather than earned merit; such power may come in the form of rights, benefits, social comfort, opportunities, or the ability to define what is normative or valued.<sup>1</sup>

## RACE

The social construction and categorization of people based on perceived shared physical traits that result in the maintenance of a sociopolitical hierarchy.<sup>1</sup>

### Cultural Perspectives/Issues with the Word

A social and political construction—with no inherent genetic or biological basis—used by social institutions to arbitrarily categorize and divide groups of individuals based on physical appearance (particularly skin color), ancestry, cultural history, and ethnic classification.

### Alternative Language/Recommendation

The appropriate response is to ask the individual and/or group on how they want to be referred to.

### Words of Convenience/Buzzwords

Commonly used within the library community but continues to perpetuate racial, power and privilege biases and microaggressions.

## RACIAL ANXIETY

The fear of being judged, based on an individual's race, when interacting with people of other races.<sup>1</sup>

## RACIAL DISPARITY

An unequal outcome one racial group experiences as compared to the outcome for another racial group.

## RACIAL EQUITY

When race can no longer be used to predict life outcomes and the outcomes for all groups are improved through policies, practices, attitudes, and cultural messages.<sup>18</sup>

## RACIAL JUSTICE

The proactive process of reinforcing and establishing a set of policies, practices, attitudes, and actions that produce equitable power, access, opportunities, treatment, impacts, and outcomes for all individuals and groups impacted by racism. It is not just the absence of discrimination and inequities, but also the presence of deliberate systems and supports to achieve and sustain racial equity through proactive and preventative measures.<sup>1</sup>

## RACIALLY CODED LANGUAGE

Language that seems to be race-neutral but is a disguise for racial stereotypes without the stigma of explicit racism.<sup>1</sup>

## RACISM

A system of structuring opportunity and assigning value based on phenotypic properties (e.g., skin color and hair texture associated with “race” in the United States.) This “system” — which ranges from daily interpersonal interactions shaped by race to racialized opportunities for good education, housing, employment, and so forth — unfairly disadvantages people belonging to marginalized racial groups and significantly limits access, unfairly advantages individuals belonging to social and politically dominant racial groups, and “ultimately undermines the full potential of the whole society.”<sup>1</sup>

- Structural racism  
Results from laws, policies and practices that produce cumulative, durable and rave-based inequities and includes the failure to correct previous laws and practices that were explicitly or effectively racist.
- Institutional racism  
Results from policies, practices and procedures of institutions — such as library, school, law enforcement — that marginalize diver racial groups.
- Interpersonal Racism  
Occurs when individuals from socially and politically dominant racial groups behave in ways that diminish and harm people who belong to other racial groups. Interpersonal racism is therefore distinct from bigotry (negative attitudes about an outgroup, not necessarily tied to race) or prejudice (a preconceived opinion that is not based on reason or actual experience).
- Internalized racism  
Refers to the acceptance by diverse racial populations of the negative societal beliefs and stereotypes about themselves — including negative stereotypes and beliefs about complexion and color (i.e., colorism) that reinforce the superiority of Whites and can lead to the perception of themselves as devalued, worthless and powerless.

## SPHERE OF INFLUENCE

An area within which the political influence or the interests of one group are held to be most important.

## SOCIAL JUSTICE

A process, not an outcome, which 1. seeks fair (re) distribution of resources, opportunities, and responsibilities; 2. challenges the roots of oppression and injustice; 3. empowers all people to exercise self-determination and realize their full potential; and, 4. builds social solidarity and community capacity for collaborative action. Social justice focuses on power dynamics among different groups of people while acknowledging historical and institutional inequities. (Ref. 4). It has a vision of a society with equitable distribution of resources, in which “all members are physically and psychologically safe and secure, recognized, and treated with respect.”<sup>19</sup>

## SOCIOECONOMIC DISPARITY

Differences in socioeconomic status, whether measured by income, educational achievement, or occupation.

## SOCIOECONOMIC STATUS

It encompasses income, educational attainment, occupational prestige, and subjective perceptions of social status and social class. It also encompasses quality-of-life attributes and opportunities afforded to people within society and is a consistent predictor of a vast array of health and psychological outcomes.<sup>20</sup>

### Cultural Perspectives/Issues with the Word

The poor,  
Poor people

### Alternative Language/Recommendation

People whose incomes are below the federal poverty threshold. People whose self-reported incomes are in the lowest income bracket. Use person-first language instead. Define income brackets and levels if possible.

### Words of Convenience/Buzzwords

Commonly used however, many people find the terms “low-class” and “poor” pejorative.

## STAKEHOLDERS

A group of people involved in or affected by a course of action<sup>21</sup>

### Cultural Perspectives/Issues with the Word

The word is rooted and complicit with colonialist attitudes and values.

Policy-speak or jargon that people in power often abuse. The concept of a stake is something that is owned, and that may be held, possessed or hoarded. These are Western ways of being that are at odds with Indigenous concepts of sharing, and by using the word “stakeholder” to describe those who have an interest in an issue, we use a Western term that implicitly normalizes Western ways of being as the norm in research.

### Alternative Language/Recommendation

Those who are affected by or can affect a decision or issue; Interested parties; Interest groups

### Words of Convenience/Buzzwords

Commonly used in the library community, government, and most organizations.  
Recommendation: The word is considered offensive by Indigenous people and Blacks

## STATUS QUO

Is one type of cognitive bias that involves people preferring that things stay as they are or that the current state of affairs remains the same. This bias can have an effect on human behavior, but it is also a topic of interest in other fields, including sociology, politics, and economics. Be aware of how the status quo bias influences your decisions and behaviors, and look for ways to reduce the bias in the choices you make each and every day.

## STEREOTYPE

Exaggerated or distorted beliefs about the characteristics, attributes, and behaviors of individuals and communities that categorize individuals and communities into singular, pejorative terms.<sup>1</sup>

## STEREOTYPE THREAT

The threat of being stereotyped or the fear of doing something that would inadvertently confirm that stereotype. The resulting apprehension often causes the individual to behave in ways that reinforce that stereotype.

## STRUCTURAL RACISM

Historical, social, political, institutional, and cultural factors that contribute to, legitimize, and maintain racial inequities. Structural racism is not something that a few people or institutions choose to practice. It is the confluence of racist concepts and theories that control our economic, political, and social systems.<sup>1</sup>

## SYSTEMS OF OPPRESSION

The ways in which history, culture, ideology, public policies, institutional practices, and personal behaviors and beliefs interact to maintain a hierarchy—based on race, class, gender, sexuality, and/or other group identities—that allows the privileges associated with the dominant group and the disadvantages associated with the targeted group to endure and adapt over time.<sup>1</sup>

## SYSTEMS REFORM (SYSTEMS CHANGE)

A process that addresses the root causes of social problems and fundamentally alters the components and structures that perpetuate them in public systems (i.e., education system, child welfare system, etc.).<sup>1</sup>

## UNDERSERVED

People that have limited or no access to resources or that are otherwise disenfranchised. They experience barriers in accessing and using library services often because of geographic location, religion, sexual orientation, gender identity, race and ethnicity populations, or special needs (e.g., language barriers, disabilities, age, etc.). Examples from the library community include, as defined by scientific and library federal agencies and organizations:

**ALA** — *Groups that do not have equal access to programs and services or have not been identified as a key audience for library services.* <https://www.ala.org/news/state-americas-libraries-report-2014/diversity>

**IMLS** — *Efforts to serve individuals of diverse geographic, cultural, and socioeconomic backgrounds; individuals with disabilities; individuals with limited functional literacy or information skills; individuals having difficulty using a library or museum; and underserved urban and rural communities, including children from families with incomes below the poverty line.*

## UNDERREPRESENTED MINORITY

A term that specifically describes specific groups of people not fully represented in academic and career fields like science, technology, engineering and math, within the library profession and other fields. As defined from federal agencies and/or national library associations:

**NSF** — *Women, persons with disabilities, and underrepresented minority groups—Blacks or African Americans, Hispanics or Latinos, and American Indians or Alaska Natives—are underrepresented in science and engineering (S&E). That is, their representation in S&E*

*education and S&E employment is smaller than their representation in the U.S. population.* [www.ncses.nsf.gov/pubs/nsf19304/digest/introduction](http://www.ncses.nsf.gov/pubs/nsf19304/digest/introduction)

**NASA** — *Refers to persons from racial and ethnic groups whose enrollment in STEM education or participation in STEM professions is much smaller than that group's representation in the general population. ... In the STEM area, "underserved" has typically referred to women and persons with disabilities.*

[www.nasa.gov/offices/education/programs/national/must/home/definitions.html](http://www.nasa.gov/offices/education/programs/national/must/home/definitions.html)

## Cultural Perspectives/Issues with the Word

1. Can be considered racist language because it blinds us to the differences in circumstances of members in the group. By aggregating groups together based on their low levels of representation, the underserved and underrepresented label becomes insensitive to the unique needs and circumstances of its group members. Provides a convenient cover to hide data. How to know the percentages of participation by different racial/cultural groups. Data cannot be compared across organizations or time unless the definitions are the same or the data is disaggregated.
2. Can be considered racist language because it implies a master-slave relationship between overrepresented majorities and underrepresented minorities.
3. There is no such history or movement for underrepresented minorities. There are no easily found websites that serve as a gathering place for learning, sharing, and celebrating underserved and underrepresented people. Not recognized in pop or other cultural terms (e.g., songs, T-shirts and movies).<sup>22</sup>

## Alternative Language/Recommendation

Libraries should embrace and reference racial and ethnic identities. **Recommendation:** Minimize use of the words underserved and underrepresented as they are linked directly to placing a type of "otherism" on a group of people. It does need to be recognized however that depending on one's location, these terms can target a wider range of the population in the most general sense. **Recommendation:** Stop using the word "underserved" in our speech, manuscripts, reports, surveys, proposals, presentations, websites and in the names of organizations, conferences, and workshops. Underserved is not a permanent fixture of a group's identity. Consider not continuing to promote this position.

## Words of Convenience/Buzzwords

- Commonly used in the library community but continues to perpetuate racial, power and privilege biases and microaggressions.
- Word not going away in grants and when talking to above groups.

## VALUES

Principles that guide our beliefs and actions as librarians and citizens. Inclusion as a value and way of thinking requires something more. Inclusion is about people gaining “social acceptance,” having positive interactions with one’s peers and being valued for who they are. As such, it must be “internally motivated” and stem from embracing the belief that all people have value and the right to belong. Inclusion values diversity and allows for the real opportunity for people to have meaningful relationships.

## WHITE FRAGILITY

A range of emotions and behaviors that white people exhibit when confronted with uncomfortable aspects of race, other ethnic and cultural groups. This may include outward displays of emotions such as anger, fear, guilt, and behaviors such as argumentation, silence, and leaving the stress-inducing situation. These behaviors, in turn, function to reinstate white racial equilibrium.<sup>1</sup>

## WHITE PRIVILEGE

The unearned power and advantages that benefit people just by virtue of being White or being perceived as White.<sup>1</sup>

## WHITE SUPREMACY

An institutionally perpetuated and ever-evolving system of exploitation and domination that consolidates and maintains power and resources among White people. This system promotes the ideology of Whiteness as the standard and the belief that White people are superior to other races.

## XENOPHOBIA

Any attitude, behavior, practice, or policy that explicitly or implicitly reflects the belief that immigrants are inferior to the dominant group of people. Xenophobia is reflected in interpersonal, institutional, and systemic levels oppression and is a function of White supremacy.

*“Courageous conversations and stakeholder discussions were good. Better understand unintended biases (e.g., our use of words and the difficulty with the use of pronouns).”*

– a *Serving Communities* library director



## Reflection Questions



1. What terms do we use to refer to the various communities we serve or wish to serve? (e.g., on the Web, in program flyers, in library communications)?
2. In what ways can I/we get feedback on the use of the terms we currently use?
3. How might our library discuss the terms we use, terms we want to use, or changes we want to make with others within our library?

# SECTION 4

## Person-First and Identity-First Terms and Language

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*“Glossary was like learning a new language.”*

– a *Serving Communities* library director

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## CULTURE, ETHNICITY, AND RACE

### AGEISM

Stereotyping and discrimination against individuals or groups based on their age. Ageism can take many forms, including prejudicial attitudes, discriminatory practices, or institutional policies and practices that perpetuate stereotypical beliefs.<sup>1</sup>

#### Cultural Perspectives/Issues with the Word

The elderly,  
Elderly people,  
The aged,  
Aging dependents,  
Seniors,  
Senior citizens

#### Alternative Language/Recommendation

Older adults,  
Older people,  
Persons 65 years and older,  
The older population

Recommendation: Avoid using terms such as “seniors,” “the aged,” “aging dependents” and similar “othering” terms because they connote a stereotype and suggest that members of the group are not part of society but rather a group apart.

### BIPOC

An acronym that stands for Black, Indigenous and People of Color. People use the term BIPOC to acknowledge that not all people of color face equal levels of injustice. The construction of the term “BIPOC” recognizes that Black and Indigenous people are several impacted by systemic racial injustices as defined by Merriam-Webster. The term BIPOC is still considered by many to indicate a hierarchy among communities of color.<sup>1</sup>

#### Cultural Perspectives/Issues with the Word

1. A catch-all term to describe a group of people, from diverse commonly used in the library community, academic and government
2. Denies individuals the right to name themselves. From their perspective, use the appropriate word(s).
3. Each qualifier has historical, political and holds a specific meaning to this racial group.
4. Whites are unaware, insensitive and disrespectful about the effects of using this term.

#### Alternative Language/Recommendation

Appropriate response will be to ask a group and/or individual(s) on how they want to be referred to. Preferred terms to use are “people/persons of color and communities of color.

Recommendation: Never use this word.

#### Words of Convenience/Buzzwords

Commonly used in the library community but continues to perpetuate racial, power and privilege biases and microaggressions.



## BLACK/AFRICAN AMERICAN/BLACK DIASPORA/AFRICAN (COUNTRY SPECIFIC)/AFRO LATINX/PEOPLE OF COLOR

There is no standard definition where these words are not always interchangeable nor should not be used as an umbrella term for people of African ancestry worldwide because it obscures other ethnicities or national origins, such as Nigerian, Kenyan, Jamaican, Panamanian, as examples. “People of color” is a term used in a political or social (not biological) identity among and across groups of people that are described as non-White. This term is a qualifier that only describes skin color and denies them the respect and recognition of their individual identity.<sup>1</sup>

### Cultural Perspectives/Issues with the Word

1. Not all people are from Africa.
2. Denies individuals the right to name themselves. From their perspective, use the appropriate word(s).
3. Each qualifier has historical and/or political implications.
4. Whites may be unaware, insensitive and/or uncomfortable about using this qualifier.

### Alternative Language/Recommendation

Appropriate response will be to ask a group and/or individual(s) on how they want to be referred to. If needed, use Black people when speaking in general contexts.

## CHICANO/CHICANA/HISPANIC/LATINO/LATINX

There is no standard definition. Librarians should ask the group and/or individuals what is their appropriate choice.

### CHICANO/CHICANA

Chicano or Chicana is a chosen identity of some Mexican Americans in the United States. The term became widely used during the Chicano Movement of the 1960s by many Mexican Americans to express a political stance founded on pride in a shared cultural, ethnic, and community identity.

### HISPANIC

Someone who is a native of, or descends from, a Spanish-speaking country. NOTE: that “Hispanic” is not necessarily an all-encompassing term, and the labels “Hispanic” and “Latinx” have different connotations.

## LATINO/LATINA

Someone who is native of, or descends from, a Latin American country. The term Latino/Latina includes people from Brazil and excludes those who were born in or descended from Spain. Not all Brazilians identify themselves as Latino/Latina, but many do. Thus, Hispanic refers more to language, while Latino/Latina refers more to culture. The word “Latino” is gendered (i.e., Latino is masculine and Latina is feminine).

## LATINX

The term “Latinx” (and its related forms) might be preferred by those originating from Latin America, including Brazil. Some use the word “Hispanic” to refer to those who speak Spanish; however, not every group in Latin America speaks Spanish (e.g., in Brazil, the official language is Portuguese). “Latinx” can also be used as a gender-neutral or nonbinary term inclusive of all genders.<sup>1,2,3</sup>



## SOCIAL ORIENTATION & GENDER DIVERSITY

### GENDER

The socially constructed ideas about behavior, actions, and roles of a particular sex.<sup>1</sup>

### GENDER IDENTITY

A component of gender that describes a person’s psychological sense of other gender. Many people describe gender identity as a deeply felt, inherent sense of being a boy, a man, or male; a girl, a woman, or female, or a nonbinary gender (e.g., genderqueer)

### GENDER-INCLUSIVE LANGUAGE

Terms used to be more gender equitable. It is the opposite of gender-exclusive language. Examples of gender-inclusive nouns for general use: everyone or everybody; distinguished guests, folks, friends, individual, people, and y’all. Examples of gender-inclusive occupational nouns: chair or chairperson, congressperson or member of congress; first-year student. When describing a specific person, use that person’s pronouns (be sure to ask for their pronouns rather than assume).<sup>1</sup>

## GENDER PRONOUN

The term a person uses to identify themselves with their name (i.e., they/them/theirs, she/her/hers, he/him/his, etc)<sup>1</sup>

### Cultural Perspectives/Issues with the Word

Pronoun identified by each individual should be respected and should not be regarded as optional.

### Alternative Language/Recommendation

Appropriate response will be to ask a group and/or individual(s) on how they want to be referred to.

Recommendation: A person's pronouns convey their gender identity. Transgender, gender nonconforming, gender-fluid, non-binary, and other LGBTQ+ people use a wide variety of pronouns that affirm who they are. Using someone's self-defined pronouns respects all identities on the spectrum.

## LGBTQIA2+

An acronym that stands for "lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer." The plus (+) is inclusive of all other expressions of gender identity and sexual orientation<sup>1</sup>

### Cultural Perspectives/Issues with the Word

This acronym is language originally offered by people from this community to both identify themselves and provide a more inclusive representation of the different identities of individuals who are a part of that group. Terms to avoid are birth sex or natal sex.

### Alternative Language/Recommendation

Assigned sex or sex assigned at birth.

Recommendations: Library community should not use acronyms when working with diverse groups of people. Appropriate to ask individuals how they would like to be referred to, instead of using the common blanket term. Consider your audience when using the term "queer"; not everyone receives this word positively; many members of the LGBTQIA+ community have not reclaimed it.

### Words of Convenience/Buzzwords

Though considered a buzzword, some LGBTQIA2+ groups are fine with this reference, others may not.

## TRANSGENDER

An umbrella term used to describe the full range of people whose gender identity and/or gender role do not conform to what is typically associated with their sex assigned at birth.<sup>1</sup>

### Cultural Perspectives/Issues with the Word

The term "Transgendered" is inappropriate because of the connotations that being transgender is something that is done to a person and to create distance from misconceptions that being trans requires a before/after, surgery, or other formal transition.

The term "tranny" is considered a slur.

### Alternative Language/Recommendation

Recommendations: Be mindful how you say the term.

Appropriate to ask individuals how they would like to be referred to.



## DISABILITY STATUS

### ABLEISM

Stereotyping, prejudicial attitudes, discriminatory behavior and social oppression toward people with disabilities to inhibit the rights and well-being of people with disabilities, which is currently the largest minority group in the United States.<sup>1</sup>

### DISABILITY

Can be broadly defined as the interaction of physical, psychological, intellectual, and socioemotional differences or impairments with the social environment.<sup>24</sup> The members of some groups of people with disabilities—effectively subcultures within the larger culture of disability—have ways of referring to themselves that they would prefer others to adopt. The overall principle for using disability language is

to maintain the integrity (worth and dignity) of all individuals as human beings. For more information on problematic and preferred language use related to disability, please refer to the APA bias-free language guidelines for writing about disability.<sup>1</sup>

Cultural Perspectives/ Issues with the Word	Alternative Language/ Recommendations
Special needs, Physically challenged, Mentally challenged, Mentally retarded	Person with a disability, Disabled person, People with intellectual disability, Physically disabled person,
Person who is deaf, Hearing impaired person	Deaf person
Person with blindness	Blind person, Person who is blind
Visually challenged person, Sight-challenged person	Visually impaired person, Person who is visually (or vision) impaired,
Wheelchair-bound person	Wheelchair user, Person in a wheelchair

## PERSON-FIRST AND IDENTIFY-FIRST LANGUAGE

Person-first and Identify-first Language puts the person before the disability, and describes what a person has, not who a person is. Person-first and Identify-first with a disability, “individuals with disabilities,” and “children with disabilities,” as opposed to phrases that identify people based solely on their disability, such as “the disabled.” Person-first and Identify-first Language puts the person before the disability, and describes what a person has, not who a person is. Person-first and Identify-first Language uses phrases such as “person with a disability,” “individuals with disabilities,” and “children with disabilities,” as opposed to phrases that identify people based solely on their disability, such as “the disabled.”

Cultural Perspectives/ Issues with the Word	Alternative Language/ Recommendations
Wheelchair bound	Person who uses a wheelchair
Mentally ill	Person living with a mental health condition, Person with a mental disorder, Person with a mental illness
Homeless person	Person without housing



### Reflection Questions



1. What terms do we use to refer to the various communities we serve or wish to serve? (e.g., on the Web, in program flyers, in library communications)?
2. In what ways can I/we get feedback on the use of the terms we currently use?
3. How might our library discuss the terms we use, terms we want to use, or changes we want to make with others within our library?

# RESOURCES

The *Serving Communities: A Glossary for an Inclusive Library* draws from a number of thoughtful, informative, purposeful and established glossaries and research. In particular, we want to recognize the amazing work of the American Psychological Association's *Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion: Inclusive Language Guidelines*<sup>1</sup> as we drew heavily on their work from which we expanded and extended our glossary to serve the library community directly. Please note that these explanations are distinct and separate and represent the *Serving Communities* project team's perspective only.

<sup>1</sup> American Psychological Association. (2021). Inclusive language guidelines. <https://www.apa.org/about/apa/equity-diversity-inclusion/language-guidelines.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> Leonie J. Rennie, S.M. Stocklmayer and J.K. Gilbert. 2019. *Supporting Self-Directed Learning in Science and Technology Beyond the School Years*. Routledge Taylor and Francis Group. New York.)

<sup>3</sup> Institute for Museum and Library Service (2022). Definition came from <https://www.ims.gov/grants/grants-state/purposes-and-priorities-1sta>

<sup>4</sup> Dubb, Steve, S. McKinley and T. Howard (2013). The Anchor Dashboard: Aligning Institutional Practice to Meet Low-Income Community Needs. The Democracy Collaborative at the University of Maryland. Accessed September 2021 <https://community-wealth.org/content/anchor-dashboard-aligning-institutional-practice-meet-low-income-community-needs>

<sup>5</sup> Randall, Cynthia, D. Keeley and J. Falk (2021). Downloaded from <https://ims.gov/sites/default/files/project-proposals/re-250085-ols-21-full-proposal.pdf>

<sup>6</sup> American Library Association and Harwood Institute (2021) *Community Conversation Workbook*. Libraries Transforming Communities Initiative. Downloaded from <https://www.ala.org/tools/librariestransform/libraries-transforming-communities/resources-for-library-professionals>

<sup>7</sup> Van Stralendorff, Chloe (April 26, 2018). Building Meaningful Relationships Through Community Engagement. *Public Libraries Online*. Downloaded from <https://publiclibrariesonline.org/2018/04/building-meaningful-relationships-through-community-engagement/>

<sup>8</sup> Charles, Anthony, L. Loucks, F. Berkes and D. Armitage (2020). "Community Science: A typology and its implications for governance of social-ecological systems." *Environmental Science and Policy*. 106 (2020). pp. 77-86.

<sup>9</sup> Falk, J. H., & Dierking, L. D. (2012). Lifelong learning for adults: The role of free-choice experiences. In B. Fraser, K. Tobin, & C. J. McRobbie (Eds.), *Second international hand-book of science education* (pp. 1063-1079). London: Springer.

<sup>10</sup> Heller, Jean (2017). "AP WAS THERE: Black Men Untreated In Tuskegee Syphilis Study." *AP News*. Downloaded from <https://apnews.com/article/business-science-health-race-and-ethnicity-syphilis-e9dd07eaa4e74052878a68132cd3803a>

<sup>11</sup> Skloot, R. (2018). *The immortal life of Henrietta lacks*. Picador.

<sup>12</sup> Philip Bell, Carrie Tzou, Leah Bricker and AnnMarie D. Baines (2012). Learning in Diversities of Structures of Social Practice. *Human Development*. Vol. 55, No. 5/6, Conceptualizing Cultural and Racialized Process in Learning, pp. 269-284 (16 pages). Published By: S. Karger AG.

<sup>13</sup> American Psychological Association (2021b). Equity, diversity, and inclusion framework. <https://www.P.org/about/apa/equity-diversity-inclusion/equity-division-inclusion-framework.pdf>

<sup>14</sup> Balboa Park IDEA Working Group, 2020. Balboa Park, San Diego 8.

<sup>15</sup> Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary (2022). Downloaded from <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/advocacy>

<sup>16</sup> Cooke, Nicole A. Information Services To Diverse Populations Developing Culturally Competent Library Professionals. Library and Information Science Text Series. Libraries Unlimited. An Imprint of ABC-CLIO, LLC. Santa Barbara.

<sup>17</sup> Braswel, Porter. 2022. "What's Wrong With The Word Minority?" *Fast Company*. Downloaded on 6/14/2022 from <https://www.fastcompany.com/90760220/whats-wrong-with-the-word-minority>

<sup>18</sup> Awake to Woke to Work Framework <https://ncwwi-dms.org/resource-library/inclusivity-racial-equity/advancing-racial-equity/1456-awake-to-woke-to-work-building-a-race-equity-culture/file>

<sup>19</sup> From *Teaching for Diversity and Social Justice*, Adams, Bell, Goodman, and Joshi, 3rd ed., Routledge 2016)

<sup>20</sup> American Psychological Association (2019). *Guidelines for psychological practice for people with low-income and economic marginalization*. <https://www.apa.org/about/policy/guidelines-lowincome.pdf>

<sup>21</sup> Reed, Mark. "Should we banish the word "stakeholder"?" (August 4, 2022). *Fast Track Impact Blog*. Downloaded on October 6, 2022 <https://www.fasttrackimpact.com/post/why-we-shouldn-t-banish-the-word-stakeholder>.

<sup>22</sup> Williams, Tiffani. June 19, 2020. 'Underrepresented Minority' Considered Harmful, Racist Language. Downloaded article on October 15, 2021 from <https://cacm.acm.org/blogs/blog-cacm/245710-underrepresented-minority-considered-harmful-racist-language/fulltext>

<sup>23</sup> Brandeis University PARC, n.d.)

<sup>24</sup> World Health Organization. (2011). *World report on disability*. Downloaded on October 13, 2022. [https://www.who.int/disabilities/world\\_report/2011/en/](https://www.who.int/disabilities/world_report/2011/en/).

<sup>25</sup> ODLLOS Glossary of Terms", American Library Association, September 7, 2017. <http://www.ala.org/aboutala/odlos-glossary-terms> (Accessed October 21, 2021) Document ID: 7f5014c8-ea23-4f6e-8449-dc956119ab1b National Education Association