

Developing Gender-Affirming Library Spaces, Systems, Services and Staff



VCU Libraries
library.vcu.edu

A decorative graphic consisting of a large, light blue dashed circle that frames the text. Various colored circles (teal, yellow, green, orange, pink) are scattered around the perimeter of the dashed circle, some overlapping it. The colors include teal, yellow, green, orange, and pink.

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Where it all began...

VCU Libraries Gender Inclusive
Workgroup and final report:

go.vcu.edu/gender-inclusive-library

Report:



VCU

Virginia Commonwealth University
VCU Scholars Compass

VCU Libraries

VCU Libraries Task Force Reports

2018

Gender-Inclusive Library Workgroup Report

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Words matter

Some terminology may be new to you.

tinyurl.com/GendAffirmHandout



Handout:

Developing Gender-Affirming Library Spaces, Systems, Services & Staff

VCU Libraries Gender-Inclusive Library Workgroup Report: go.vcu.edu/gender-inclusive-library
Includes background information, recommendations, terminology, and literature review/resources.

Terminology - See report for full list and also resources for additional context

Cisgender / Cis: "Identifies as their sex assigned at birth." Note that cisgender does not end in "-ed".

Cissexism: Social system that privileges and normalizes cisgender bodies and identities, thereby branding trans people as abnormal. Cissexism can include a variety of assumptions.

Deadnaming: Calling a transgender or nonbinary person by their given birth name, rather than the name they use.

Gender expression: How a person communicates their gender identity, usually via appearance/ behavior.

Gender identity: A person's concept of self as female, male, both, or neither. Gender identity may or may not match the sex a person was assigned at birth.

Gender nonconforming: People whose gender expression differs from stereotypical expectations. Gender nonconforming people may identify as male, female, some combination of both, or neither.

LGBTQIA: a common acronym (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, questioning, intersex, asexual) that encompasses a variety of sexual and gender minority identities. See also LGBT, LBGTO, GLBT, etc.

Nonbinary: Preferred umbrella term for all genders other than female/male; used as an adjective (e.g. "Jesse is a nonbinary person"). Not all nonbinary people identify as trans and not all trans people identify as nonbinary. Please ask and use the term and pronouns preferred by the individual.

Pronouns: The way people wish to be referred to in third person. If you're not sure what it's typically okay to ask. The term "preferred pronoun" is outdated; for many people, being a preference invalidates the importance of using the name based on the gender of



Selected terms

Cisgender

Person identifies as the sex assigned at birth

LGBTQIA

Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans/ Transgender, Questioning/ Queer, Intersex, Asexual...

Personal gender pronouns

Way people would like to be referred in the third person: he/him; she/her; they/them; etc



Nonbinary

Preferred umbrella term for all genders other than female/male

Deadnaming

Act of calling a transgender or nonbinary person by their given birth name, rather than name of use

Transgender / Trans

People whose gender identity differs from sex assigned at birth
Note: do not add “ed” to the end



Developing Gender Affirming...

- ◎ Systems & Online Spaces
- ◎ Services, Staffing, Culture
- ◎ Physical Library Spaces

The background features several overlapping circles in various colors: orange, yellow, pink, green, and teal. Some circles are solid, while others are dashed. A large, light blue dashed circle is centered behind the main title.

Online

Systems & Online Spaces

Actively affirming identities



Systems considerations: names

Names are critically important.

- Many trans and nonbinary folks use names that are different from their full legal first names, which can put them in precarious positions when a system displays only their legal name.
- Allow users to have control over what name displays, where.
- If you can't allow that, don't show names if you don't have to.



Systems considerations: names

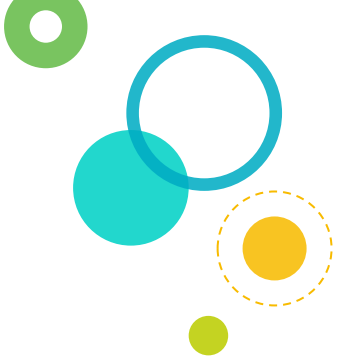
What we did:

- Made a private, unobtrusive workflow for users to request name changes in our ILS.
- Updated all forms (including for staff) to not auto-populate names.
- If we display default names on user interfaces, display user ID instead, or display nothing.
- Promote ORCID as an inclusive scholarly identifier.
- Leveraged connections/knowledge in central IT



Systems considerations

Other considerations on websites/software:

- Ask for gender rarely and thoughtfully
 - Check assumptions about biology
 - Remember intersections
 - Help people see themselves
- 



Systems considerations

What we did:

- Made sure we aren't asking for gender on forms
- If asking for an honorific, include "Mx."
 - Donor forms, y'all!
- Updated style guide to include singular "they" instead of "he or she" and change Mother's room language
- Updated online floor maps for inclusive restrooms
- Diversity and equity web page (in progress)
- Published and publicized our report!



Reflection on...

Systems & Online Spaces

User names, assumptions, privacy

Chat now!

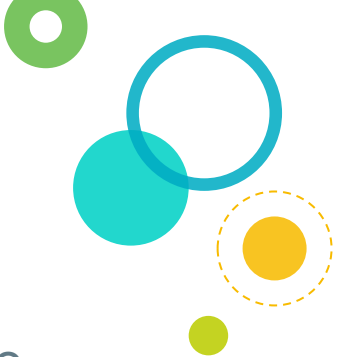


Services

Services, Staffing, Culture
Training and more



Provide training for all service desk staff

- Invite a facilitator from outside the library to provide training.
 - Offer more than a single training opportunity.
 - Provide space in regular staff meetings to discuss gender inclusive practices and to answer questions.
 - Invest in SafeZone or similar Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion training for staff.
- 



Model and practice!

- Supervisors/managers should model the behavior they want staff to adopt.
- Add pronouns to nametags, email signature lines, business cards, and use in conversation.
- Use neutral collective terms (students, researchers, comrades) instead of gendered terms.
- In verifying patron accounts, offer options that don't require a deadname.
- When responding to questions about restrooms, mention all of them, including universal or gender-neutral ones.



Reflection on...

Services, Staffing, Culture

Patron & staff opportunities; staff training

Chat now!

The background features a collection of colorful circles and dashed lines. On the left, there is a large orange circle with a dashed red outline, overlapping a yellow circle and a small pink circle. On the right, there is a green circle with a white dot, a yellow circle with a dashed yellow outline, and a large teal circle with a white dot. At the bottom left, there is a green circle with a dashed green outline, a large lime green circle, and a small cyan circle. At the bottom right, there is a cyan circle with a dashed cyan outline. The word "Spaces" is centered in a large, bold, teal font, enclosed within a large, light blue dashed circle.

Spaces

Physical Library Spaces

Free to pee



Library spaces

Restrooms

- Highlight currently available restroom facilities.
- Improve existing restrooms.
- Provide access to sanitary products.
- Build multi-stall, all-gender restrooms.
- Communicate about access to restrooms.

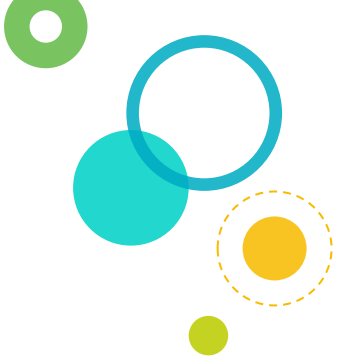
Other spaces

- Privacy: Increase awareness of spaces where sound is still audible.



Library spaces

What we did:

- Publicized existing restroom facilities.
 - Began engineering study for new universal restrooms.
 - Added sanitary receptacles to gendered restrooms.
 - Added tampon vending options.
 - Added signage and sound mitigation to study rooms and other spaces.
- 



Reflection on...

Physical Library Spaces

Restrooms, signage, shared spaces

Chat now!



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The Big Takeaway

and

Questions





Additional Resources

The resources below have been published since the release of the [Gender Inclusive Workgroup Report](#):


[Supporting Trans People in Libraries](#), Krueger, S, (2019)

[Trans-inclusive Design](#), White, E., A List Apart (2019)

[What It Means To Be Out: Queer, Trans, and Gender Nonconforming Identities in Library Work](#), Fisher, et.al., (2019)

More reading:

- [Transgender style guide](#)
- [TransAllyship Workbook](#)

A decorative graphic featuring a large teal ring in the top left, a large yellow ring in the bottom right, and several smaller circles in shades of blue, green, orange, and pink. Dashed lines in various colors (teal, green, yellow) form a path around the text.

Remember: this is only the beginning of the conversation.

These efforts are ongoing.



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Presentation: tinyurl.com/GendAffirm