

## Public Library Association 2016

### Big Ideas – Verna Myers

Ms. Myers is the author of *Moving Diversity Forward: How to Move From Well-Meaning to Well-Doing and What if I Say the Wrong Thing? 25 Habits for Culturally Effective People*. She graduated from Harvard University Law Schools and runs a firm whose mission is to eradicate the barriers of race, gender, ethnicity and sexual orientation.

The language of inclusion is not worrying about saying the wrong thing; it considers the things that we fear in us and fear in others

Theme of conference is Extraordinary libraries create extraordinary communities; libraries are the anchors to extraordinary

Inclusion of all people requires facing our biases and working toward being extraordinary – can lead to:

- Improved service and satisfaction
- More diverse perspectives – greater innovation and creativity
- Enhance problem-solving; predictability' ability to attract diverse talent & public from diff background – role
- models, competencies and skills' increased morale, performance and contribution by employees
- Longer tenure – less unwanted attrition
- Improved reputation with & connection

What if I say the wrong thing? We have to recognize that we do not have color-blindness and each look through our own cultural lens. We have blind spots and our experiences have taught us to think of others in certain ways.

Be aware of your cultural lens and how it shapes your interactions; story of traveling in China

- Chinese group seeing a tall black woman – her reaction was staring back and asking what's wrong with those people
- Used my mother's lens – family law not to stare, believe universal value
- Black lens – people staring not good
- When she changed her lens to be more open by waved at the group of Chinese people, they waved back and were very friendly
- Diversity lens shapes our reactions – we are never neutral and react using our own differences in cultural norms

What can we do?

- Remember all cultures are valid
- Get more curious, explore and experience the differences
- Don't go to the golden rule – platinum rule treat as the person wants to be treated
- Name your lens
- Make sure you remember your way is only one way

Embrace your biases

- Blind spots and unconscious bias
- What does your brain do automatically, human condition that you are taught and learn from birth

Recognize behaviors that show your biases

- Were you in the "in group" or excluded from it

- Leniency bias – objective rules applied flexibly to in group
- Racial bias – confirms biases

Harvard's Implicit Association Test (IAT), Project Implicit [www.implicit.harvard.edu](http://www.implicit.harvard.edu) is a way to find out what your social attitudes are

Stay on top of your biases

- Do an inventory of your: excited about, focus on and ignore on resume, who you have mentored
- Over to your house, fear, believe, share info with

Weaken your biases by

- Slowing down your decisions, primed to see,
- Question your conclusions,
- Go looking for information that disconfirms what you now believe,
- Think of counter examples,
- Rotate opportunity (circulate)

Watch out for micro-inequities (small acts of exclusion) that you unconsciously use in your speech

- Living in that part of town
- You don't seem gay to me
- Your English is so good
- Can you give me someone who can speak "American"
- Didn't know you were so religious
- Thought you were Hispanic
- Making fun of names/accents
- Touching pregnant stomach
- Trans-person quizzing about anatomy
- Demonstrating surprise over accomplishments
- Mistaken identity
- Using slang from different culture

Micro-Affirmations Help

- Speak to people
- Say names correctly no nicknames
- Say thank you
- Start by believing what people are telling you about their different experiences , especially the painful

Intent vs Impact

- Seek the experiences and demonstrate empathy
- Say wrong thing
- Apologize
- Be curious about the impact
- Don't add insult to injury
- Don't beat yourself up
- Don't pretend to know
- Learn terminology
- Listen more
- Gender neutral pronouns – Zie (he/she); Zim (him/her); Zir (his/hers)
- Expand your comfort zone

- Say hello; more toward difference
- Ask someone to have lunch
- Expand who you mentor/sponsor
- Purposely connect
- Co-lead a project with someone different
- Put yourself in places where you are a minority
- Don't try to be Perfect

Understand privilege and use it to Interrupt Bias When YOU See It – head and tail winds

- Unearned advantage
- Sense of self-advantage – guilt; move toward low-guilt and use your position to increase awareness
- Worry about the children – interrupt bad behavior or word choices
- Power dynamics requires courage
- Joking can mask discomfort
- Organizations have speakers to increase diversity awareness

### **Big Ideas - Sherry Turkle**

#### **Reclaiming Conversation**

**Ms. Turkle is a professor at Massachusetts Institute of Technology. She has written five books including one focused on the dying art of conversation, *Alone Together*.**

We are alone together with our digital media devices

- Students tell her “I’d rather text than talk” - wanted to keep their communications through streams
- Flight from conversation – don’t visit her in office during open hours
- People were finding ways around conversation - they like open-ended and spontaneous, and do not like being fully present and vulnerable

What does this shift mean for relationships?

- Much of our conversations are ones we have with ourselves and we need human interaction to validate our thinking and express those ideas
- At a moment of friction and conflict – new romance with their phones, feel complicated about it, uncomfortable
- 89% took out phone during a social interaction and 82% said it diminished the conversation
- Home – man talks about giving his older daughter a bath, talks to her during the bath time, created the bonds that are the foundation of the relationship; now gives younger 2 year old daughter a bath and does email; after telling the story was stunned to recognize the difference in how the digital device had changed/lessened the interaction
- Education – should want to talk to their professor, students want to talk less and less, want to send her an email with their question with perfect emailed answer, nothing to light up the process of gaining knowledge, old days made learning a relationship rather than a transaction, appeal of the edited life in that we want to sustain a fantasy of perfection
- Personal/friendship - 7 minute rule, takes that long to see where the conversation is going, get used to talking to a person, gets bored and goes to her phone, we are used to the boring bits

Conversation takes place in real-time and you can't control it

Do everything you can to keep libraries places of relationship, not just transaction

Metaphor of addiction – when people say this, they are saying they want what it provides, but also the things they can avoid, moment of avoidance and feeling anxiety

- Anxiety can be uncomfortable, but is also a sign that you're learning and hearing something new

A new Silent Spring – Rachel Carson – technological change had come at a cost of an assault on our environment

- A silent phone on a lunch table inhibits real conversation and trivializes the talk
- You can relearn how to identify with the feelings of others

Next steps are that we should be using our phones more mindfully not do away with them; a parallel case can be made for reading

Maryanne Wolf – deterioration of reading skills; takes long novels; Hesse book and could not read it; could not get through the book

Nicholas Carr – Google Making You Stupid; have to retrain ourselves to read deeper books, natural thing that follows by just doing online reading

Libraries need to promote the idea that deep reading is a skill that must be nurtured to be able to attain a deeper sense of understanding and knowledge

Unitasking is very important, our brains can only do one thing at a time

- It has been scientifically proven that we cannot multi-task; series of experiments where a subject is given a task and then successively more tasks; subject believes that they are doing a good job on all tasks when, in actuality, they are doing a poor job on many tasks
- Virtuous circle, need to reclaim unitasking and being alone with your thoughts in solitude; empathy and sociability will follow

Thoreau – one chair for solitude, two for friendship, and one for community.

- Solitude prepares us to come to conversation
- You need the capacity to be alone in order to have the capacity for conversation – if we don't teach our children to be alone, they won't have the capacity to relate to others
- Electroshock machine – 6 minutes alone doing nothing, begin to shock selves
- Why does she care that I take out my phone when I'm alone? It's because of the argument of the importance of solitude to the capacity of having relationships.

Six college students at a table in dining hall – heads pop up and down to access their phones alternately, surface relationships only, lacking empathy

- Empathy machines – robots and computer agents as companions, they are making them at MIT, talk to you and convince you they care about you, old woman talking to robot believes the robot cares about her
- Compact between generations, to develop robots to read to children, always available, but children don't learn as well because there is no human interaction
- Technology can make us forget what we know about life.
- College students have 40% less empathy over the last 20 years, developing empathy teaching apps
- We are the empathy app, people are the app for teaching empathy
- We must remember that fundamentally when technology is talking the place of human interaction

Virtual reality – *Clouds Over Sidra* film – makes anyone, anywhere feel the experience – works like an empathy system – Syrian refugees – TED talk

**Designing Spaces for People, Not Collections**  
**Pam Sandlian Smith, Anythink Libraries**  
**Marie Ostergard, Dokk1, Aarhus, Denmark**

Dokk1 – a place for people – rethinking the library in a new urban context; [www.dokk1.dk](http://www.dokk1.dk)

Planning and Involvement

Spaces

What happened?

Denmark city, 300,000K, by the water, cars and factories, library as driver of city development, young city, diversity and equality

The library as a hinge that has changed the flows of the city

The Vision – space for co-operation, place for dialogue, open informal learning space, unique place for children and families

The library is a covered urban public plaza in a non-commercial space

Wanted to move to space as a media, on site, meaning, credibility, meeting people, experimenting, resource person, emotional sense of humor, things that happen

Seven core values – citizen a key factor, lifelong learning, diversity, cooper and network, culture and experience

Model Program for Public Libraries – Denmark [www.modelprogrammer.slks.dk](http://www.modelprogrammer.slks.dk)

Library as four room (not literal) model – Inspirations space, Learning space, Meeting space, Performing space = experience, discovery, participation, creation = Recognition experience, Empowerment, Innovation

Question what people need from library space and what will they do in the future?

Used last responsible minute - make decisions as you go rather than all at the beginning

The Aarhus Way - iterative process

[www.DesignThinkingforlibraries.com](http://www.DesignThinkingforlibraries.com)

Lots of prototyping – set up transformation lab in old library – interactive flooring, way finding, noise control, info desk redefined

DOKK1 – community participation and involvement in naming as well

Transformation including:

- Rethinking of urban context
- Conceptual transformation
- Partnerships
- User involvement/design thinking
- Rethinking people and services

Results of new library building:

- Huge numbers of patrons
- Stay longer
- Number of children and families meets vision
- 60% of programs and events are by or with partners
- Users want to produce and perform their own things
- Unexpected usage
- Un-programmed spaces are essential Need to re-do/tweak continually
- No signs!
- Already transforming entrance
- Using technology to track usage
- Keep rethinking: “The minute we’re done we’re dead.”

## **Connect, Crowdfunder, and Kickstart: Make Dream Projects a Reality** **Emily Meloche, Chelsea District Library**

Collection of photograph negatives

Trained volunteers and seniors to scan

Stories of Chelsea campaign

- Hold an event
- Publicize in local papers, and other news sources
- Signs in out of the library

Kickstarter

- Keeps 8-10%
- Donations if goal is reached

Indiegogo

- Keeps 4-9% of raised funds

Do it Yourself

- Streamline process – form w/optional 2<sup>nd</sup> year
- Donors credit
- In Memoriam
- Keep sponsorship costs down
  - Consider multiple sponsorship sizes
- Tie to community interests
- Advertise outside library walls
- If possible, let donors choose
- Show progress
- Make sure staff is prepared
- Credit, credit, credit!