

# UHLS Youth Services Advisory Council

November 18, 2021

**VIRTUAL**

9:45 – 10:00 Casual chat

10:00 – 11:30 Meeting

**Attendance:** Mary Fellows (UHLS), Amy DuBrey (UHLS), Leah Silechia (APLM), Lee Ackerman-Sawyer (WSTR), Amy McCarthy (GUIL), Carol Roberts (TYOR), Jane Chirgwin (RENS), Debbie Scott (WTVT), Amy Caccia (VAFL), APLP, Rose Stuart (COLN), Leanna Sweet (GRAF), Beth Rienti (GUIL)

## UHLS updates

- The FLG funds are being rolled into Outreach funding from the State. This means that Hello Library is over. A new Outreach category of at-risk youth from birth to age 21 has been created. We will still have money for projects; they're just not limited to early literacy and they have to serve at-risk youth from birth to age 21. Mary will be thinking through ideas, and will no doubt reach out to you about it!
- Since Hello Library is at an end, Mary may need to reach out for some evaluative information.
- StoryWalks to continue. More updates coming as to how it will work going forward.
- Remember that the [StoryWalk Borrowing](#) document is available if you are interested in borrowing a StoryWalk. If you would like to donate your StoryWalk to UHLS, please look for instructions on this document.
- Reminder about the [CSLP Summer Symposium](#) webinar on December 2. Free registration [here](#).

**REC Update:** New programs and information coming soon. Keep an eye out for upcoming events on the AntiRacism Library services Home page.

- New Small library rep member: Cristiann Gibeau (COHS)
- Seth Strock (GUIL) from circulation is the other new member.
- Sara Yetto (HOOF) will be a "helper." We'll need more helpers, so if you're interested in working on projects but without the need to attend REC meetings, let Mary know.
- Mary is working with The McLean Group to put together Board Trainings, still coming soon!
- [Learning Circle](#) 401 coming in Dec. "[So You Want to Talk About Race](#)" author Ijeoma Oluo. The video, about an hour, is a deep and excellent dive into important topics, and Ijeoma is a terrific guide. This learning circle meets 12/8 from 10-11 am.

## Diversity, racism, and censorship

### Diversity

- Mary referenced the windows, mirrors, and sliding glass doors view of library youth collections.

*"Books are sometimes windows, offering views of worlds that may be real or imagined, familiar or strange. These windows are also sliding glass doors, and readers have only to walk through in imagination to become part of whatever world has been created and recreated by the author. When lighting conditions are*

*just right, however, a window can also be a mirror. Literature transforms human experience and reflects it back to us, and in that reflection we can see our own lives and experiences as part of the larger human experience. Reading, then, becomes a means of self-affirmation, and readers often seek their mirrors in books." - Rudine Sims Bishop*

- [Diverse BookFinder Collection Analysis Tool](#) – UHLS can provide you with the reports you need to use this tool as an assessment of your picture book collection. But there's more here – [Diverse BookFinder Collection Analysis Tool Instructions.docx](#)
- A trend to notice:
  - [Colorism in picture books](#) – A new study from the University of Chicago found “that despite no systematic differences in skin tones across ages in society, children are more likely than adults to be shown with lighter skin.” [in books]
  - We ask ourselves what that means to children reading these books and what that means for us in selecting. It is something to keep in mind as we use books for programming, and to watch to see if illustrators and art directors make any changes.
- Buy diverse books! But also display them, use them in programs, booktalk them for readers advisory.

[American Indians in Children's Literature \(AICL\): Best Books](#) - suggested as a resource

## Racism

Discussion on the Dewey decimal system and moving some topics such as Native American Religion into the Religion category. This topic is being reviewed by the Upper Hudson Cataloging Advisory Committee.

To learn more about the issue, request “Dismantling Dewey” article [here](#).

## Children's “classics”

The group discussed:

- Should books like “Little House on the Prairie” be weeded? How do we decide about books that have egregious lines – Mary in The Secret Garden says that Blacks “are not people – they're servants” (this is never refuted in the book). Or the Dr. Seuss books issue? (certain books publisher declined to republish)
  - Question: is it censorship? Response highlights: As a librarian, taking in new information and holding it up to current thinking and making a decision that this material doesn't belong in the collection anymore is professional judgement. Another way to think about it is if the book instead said “people in wheelchairs aren't people, they're servants.” Does that shift change the way you think about potentially weeding the book?
- One library removed Dr. Seuss books mentioned above (from the browseable collection) because they were getting stolen. They are available if asked. This encounter helps bring about the discussion of this topic with patrons who want them.
- Providing the Little House books, but also offering Prairie Lotus, offering another point of view.
- Patron requesting “List of Classics” for kids, spurred the conversation of more diverse books and why some classics may be problematic.
  - To ask ourselves: are we keeping “classics” for cultural nostalgia reasons when in fact they aren't circulating?

- One columnist frames the question of offering racist classics as one of limited time. *“Library budgets are limited. So is every reader’s time. Keeping racist books out of young readers’ hands won’t prevent them from growing into racists, but it may encourage them to read books with egalitarian worldviews.”* She advocates curating excellent contemporary books that honor diversity and that can become future classics.

## Censorship

Mary offered these insights and reminders:

- Current situation: precipitous rise in challenges to books about race, social equity, racism. Includes books that simply have BIPOC characters or discuss racism or Black historical figures. (New Kid, Front Desk, I Am Rosa Parks.)
- Reminder about Bill of Rights. Most if not all UHLS library boards have affirmed it: [Library Bill of Rights | Advocacy, Legislation & Issues](#)
- Facts about critical race theory reminder:
  - Critical race theory is a 40-some year-old academic theory. The core idea is that race is a social construct, and that racism is not only the product of individual bias or prejudice, but also something embedded in legal systems and policies.
  - The term critical race theory is now often used as a stand-in for the terms antiracism or social justice by people antithetical to those ideas. It has in some circumstances become the catch-all, scapegoat term for diversity and inclusion efforts.
- Ways to be prepared
  - Make sure that your library has policies and a request for reconsideration in place. Advocate from below for these things if you aren’t the director and you see these lacking.
  - Make sure that all service desks have the reconsideration forms, and that all staff know where they are and how to handle the interaction where they would be provided. If staff are nervous, demonstrate how you would handle a patron wanting a book or books removed. Role play it.
  - Know about the [ALA OIF](#). Their job is to help libraries facing challenges.
  - If you’re the director, talk with your board about how these challenges are amping up around the country and the ways in which the library is prepared to address one should it come up. Shore up any policies, including public comment policies, that need addressing. See the library Trustees Handbook, [chapter 6 on library board meetings](#), for information.
- Ways to be supportive
  - This may happen to your community’s school libraries. Or to another colleague in UHLS. Publicly addressing a challenge can be a tense time. Frontline librarians are dealing with questions and concerns from the public. We’re also very invested in hoping for a specific outcome of the challenge.

- Ways to be supportive when a challenge like this happens in your library, your school library, or another UHLS library:
  - Being the director's seat is tremendously hard at times like these. The director is the public face of the library, and as such is the go-to for the media and often the target of hostility from people with strong opinions on this issue. Be as supportive and empathetic as you can be, and cut the director a lot of slack for their attentiveness to other library business.
  - Be supportive of your board as well, even if you feel unsupportive of their decision. They are volunteers who are trying to do what they believe is right for the library. That may be what you also believe is right for the library, or it may not. No matter how you feel, in public, you support them.
  - If your school library is challenged, consult with your boss, then one of you calls the school right away to offer support and whatever help you feel able to offer. If you have a school library colleague, call that person to just express personal support. Even if you don't know them well and even if it's awkward. You would want that same call.
  - If another library in UHLS is challenged, reach out to your colleagues there. Check in with me if you want to know whom to contact. Even a quick phone call will be appreciated.

### Program ideas

[slideshow](#): Click for great ideas for the upcoming months! Participant ideas included in slides.

### Good to share! – presenters, programs, apps, reads, listens, views

Mary recommends: [Amber in Clay](#) by Laura Amy Schlitz

[Library Think Tank #ALATT- Facebook](#) - recommended as a source of support and ideas

**To request an ARC please click [here!](#) This list is updated semi-monthly!**

***Remember: These ARCs cannot be added to your collection in any way. By requesting ARCs, you are agreeing to give them to your kid, tween, or teen readers.***

Upper Hudson Youth Services

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