Meeting Minutes

I. Call to Order at 12:02pm

II. Minutes of 1-19-24 approved unanimously

III. Public Comment – none

IV. Collection Development Benchmarks
- Library staff and Trustees are looking for JEDI to recommend what the Library’s DEI goals should be for the collections.
- According to most recent DEI report, the Jones collection is at a 25.2% diversity rate. This figure is high, and matches the census demographics of Amherst. When the new Library opens in late 2025/early 2026, we will conduct another DEI analysis. Our rate will continue to increase because much weeding is happening (due to the move) and older books tend not to have diverse descriptors in their records, so even if they are diverse, they are not counted. Also, when we are located in an interim space, the entire collection will not be browsable; much will only be pageable. Staff will continue to add new books during the interim.
- Are we focused on the overall DEI rate, or are we also interested in the breakdown by category? The analysis included 12 different categories; our DEI rate grew in all categories; “Equity” was rated highest and “Middle Eastern” was rated lowest. Seeing this data helps staff to see where they should focus their purchasing efforts.
- Are there areas JEDI recommended we prioritize? We could also look at survey comments.
- Why do we feel good about the 25% DEI rate? We only have anecdotal evidence that suggests this rate is high, but there is always room for improvement. Betsey is a member of a CW MARS social justice committee – she will bring these questions to that group in April.
- We should look at the publishing trends and compare the Jones with that figure.
- How can the Jones can set an overall goal and what should it be based upon? Look to Worcester Public Library as a leader in our region for presenting collection diversity; also include “sharing the why” with our community as a way of inviting engagement. Not just numbers of our collection, but also how does it reflect our community. Also a note that we want to look beyond a reflection of our community racial demographics to see what our patrons want/need from our collection.
- Are there libraries we can compare ourselves to? How do we compare to Holyoke, Northampton, Chicopee, Springfield?
• In terms of “sharing the why,” proposed sharing some of the external barriers to our collection growth/context. Is there a way to show our public what is happening in the publishing industry? How can we be more ambitious about our collection’s diversity?

• Another good question: Is there a way to show the diversity of what circulates from our collection annually, not just the diversity percentages of what is on our shelves? (This is extremely challenging because there is no place within an item’s record where that information resides.)

• Can survey results help staff figure out what our community wants to see.

• Patrons respond well to staff displays; this helps inform staff about what patrons are looking for. When patrons ask readers’ advisory questions, they usually ask about specific authors or genres, rather than author demographics.

• This initiative is bigger than just Amherst; the Jones serves patrons from across the state; Librarians are responsible for adding items to the collection that (1) patrons request and (2) items that Librarians recommend people read (based on reviews, etc). The difficulty is finding reliable sources for books written by diverse authors about diverse topics, so that what patrons find on the shelves and in the catalog are from a wide variety of backgrounds and not just the books that have made the most money (i.e., the New York Times best sellers list).

• CW MARS will implement a new public catalog on March 4th which will make it easier for staff and patrons to create and share lists. Can we create reports through CW showing the diversity of our circulation? No, we cannot. Maybe CW MARS could be asked to purchase software that could track this information consortium-wide?

• What are other western MA libraries are doing in terms of collection DEI work? How can we collaborate with them? Can JEDI help? Staff can attend MLA in May and seek out a DEI workshop/panel.

• **Staff Action Item** For our next DH meeting: share these thoughts with staff and brainstorm what strategies we currently use that will be important to carry forward through our transition time in terms of promoting collection online, using ASPEN to make collection more accessible, and shining a light on our physical collection in a temporary (more curated) space.

V. **Adjourn at 1pm**

Next meeting (tentatively) Friday, March 22, 2024; 11:30am; Zoom