

*Praise for Practical Tips for Equality, Diversity and Inclusion in Libraries*

‘This is a book for action-oriented readers. “Often social justice work is hard and lonely” writes Montague-Hellen, but if we can “build a diverse network including people with varied experiences and viewpoints this will greatly help” us. Readable, well researched, encouraging and challenging turn by turn, the practical focus is welcome. The work offers tips towards providing more equal, diverse and inclusive library services throughout, from policy to collections management and more. The chapter on training is likely to be particularly well thumbed.’

**Sue Lacey Bryant, Vice President, CILIP and Visiting Professor in Knowledge and Information Mobilisation, Manchester Metropolitan University**

‘As an academic library leader, I am always seeking resources that offer practical insights into promoting equality, equity, diversity and inclusion (EDI). Beth’s open, candid and informative approach is enriched by her attentiveness to diverse voices and her awareness of real-world examples.

What sets this book apart is its emphasis on journeys of continuous learning and evolution. It recognises the complexity and ongoing nature of EDI work, encouraging readers to reflect and take informed action. This book does not promise easy answers but for those of us striving for equitable, diverse and inclusive libraries, it provides a thoughtful framework in support of meaningful change.’

**Josh Sendall, Director of Library Services, University of Leeds Libraries**



# **Practical Tips for Equality, Diversity and Inclusion in Libraries**

# **Practical Tips for Library and Information Professionals**

This series provides a set of practical guides for the busy professional in need of inspiration. Sourced from experienced library and information practitioners, grounded in theory, yet not overwhelmed by it, the information in these guides will tell you what you need to know to make a quick impact in a range of topical areas of professional interest.

**Series Editor:** Helen Clare (formerly Blanchett)  
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Helen has over 25 years' experience working in the education and research sectors. With a background in information science, libraries and training, she currently specialises in the strategic development of Jisc's role in supporting research culture and skills.

# **Practical Tips for Equality, Diversity and Inclusion in Libraries**

**Practical Tips for Library and  
Information Professionals**

Beth Montague-Hellen

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Published by Facet Publishing  
c/o British Library, 96 Euston Road, London NW1 2DB  
www.facetpublishing.co.uk

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*British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data*

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library.

ISBN 978-1-78330-601-5 (paperback)

ISBN 978-1-78330-602-2 (hardback)

ISBN 978-1-78330-603-9 (PDF)

ISBN 978-1-78330-604-6 (EPUB)

First published 2024



Every purchase of a Facet book helps to fund CILIP's advocacy,  
awareness and accreditation programmes for  
information professionals.

Typeset from author's files by Flagholme Publishing Services in  
10/13 pt Palatino Linotype and Open Sans.  
Printed and made in Great Britain by CPI Group (UK) Ltd, Croydon, CR0 4YY.

For Charlotte and William who I hope will grow up into a more equal world, and who I know will work with us to make that happen.





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## About the Author

Beth moved into libraries after a career as an evolutionary biologist, seeing that she could have a far greater impact by supporting others than by continuing as a researcher herself. Beth retrained at the University of Sheffield Information School, and having previously worked as a researcher support librarian at the University of Sheffield, Bishop Grossteste University and the University of Nottingham, she is currently Head of Library and Information Services at the Francis Crick Institute. Beth has a wealth of experience working in equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) projects and campaigns. In 2020 Beth jointly won the Royal Society Athena Prize for setting up the LGBTQ+ STEMinar, a conference designed to provide a space where researchers in the STEM fields can discuss and present their research in a supporting atmosphere. Beth has also previously been shortlisted for the *Gay Times* Barbara Burford Award for Excellence in STEM.

Working as the Diversity and Inclusions Officer for the Yorkshire and Humberside CILIP Members' Network and as co-chair of the CILIP LGBTQ+ Network, Beth works with other librarians to help them support equality, diversity and inclusion efforts within the libraries sector. She is also a strong supporter of UKSG and has recently joined the editorial board at the journal *Insights*.

Beth lives in Yorkshire with her wife and currently spends her free time reading, gardening, powerlifting and playing computer games: an eclectic mix.





## **Acknowledgements**

It would be impossible to acknowledge everyone I've learnt from in the space of equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI). Learning about EDI is an exercise in listening and so if I have ever talked to you about issues in this space, please know that your expertise and experience has been greatly valued and has helped create this book.

Projects described in the book either came about as a result of interviews or through other communications and conversations. People I would particularly like to thank for their knowledge and involvement are Caroline Ball, Harry Bartholomew, Michelle Bond, David Brown, Elizabeth Chapman, Jo Cornish, Anthony Davis Jr, Kirsten Elliott, Joanne Fitzpatrick, Darren Flynn, Kirsty Lingstaft, Keith Nockles, Harriet Notman, Anna Pelekanou, Holly Ranger, Emma Sansby, Joshua Sendall, Deborah Verenna.

Finally, I'd like to acknowledge the work that my wife, Kate Montague-Hellen has put into supporting me and the creation of this book.



# Abbreviations

ADHD	Attention deficit and hyperactivity disorder
BAME	Black, Asian and minority ethnic
CALC	Critical Approaches to Libraries Conference
CARE	Collective benefit, authority to control, responsibility, ethics
CILIP	Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals
COPE	Committee on Public Ethics
DEI	Diversity, equality/equity and inclusion
EDI	Equality/equity, diversity and inclusion
FAIR	Findable, accessible, interoperable, reusable
GDPR	General Data Protection Regulation
HR	Human resources
IFLA	International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions
JEDI	Justice, equality/equity, diversity and inclusion
LGBTQ+	Lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, queer, plus: the + stands for other diverse sexualities and genders
LGBTQIA+	Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex, asexual, plus
MSI	Male Success Initiative
NLISN	Neurodivergent Library and Information Staff Network
RNIB	Royal National Institute of Blind People
UKRI	UK Research and Innovation
UWE	University of the West of England
WCAG	Web Content Accessibility Guidelines



# Introduction

Equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) are topics that consistently appear in institutional strategies and ways of working documents. Managers at most institutions want to be seen to be engaging in this area, ensuring wellbeing for their staff, and welcoming in a diverse range of library users. But it can often be very hard to know what works, and what is achievable. Activities can gain popularity and spread throughout the library section – Black History Month book displays, the use of unconscious bias training and the creation of lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans and queer (LGBTQ+) staff networks being prime examples of EDI based initiatives that have become ubiquitous. In this book I address the positives, and sometimes negatives, of activities such as these, and hopefully introduce you to a wide range of other projects which may give you fresh ideas.

This book is designed as a concise and broad introduction to many of the topics you may encounter when trying to make your library inclusive and welcoming to library users and staff. It is a deliberately practical approach to EDI, concentrating on suggesting achievable actions which will make a difference to patrons and staff within your library. I have very rarely dived into theory, or discussion of the big global picture surrounding the push for equity, instead opting for a book which I hope will help you create an EDI focused mindset. At the end of each chapter there is a list of resources which will help you to learn more deeply about the topics covered. The views expressed in these books and resources will not always agree with mine. EDI is a fast-moving topic, and there are a multitude of viewpoints. I advise you to read widely and listen to many different voices on the topic.

Throughout, you will encounter case studies which describe projects carried out in a range of libraries. Some were written after interviews with the staff who spearheaded the projects, others were collated from already existing reports on the ideas behind them. The projects may not translate directly to your library, but by considering how staff have approached them, you may develop similar ideas tailored to your own situation.

Each chapter also contains a number of actions and activities. These are designed to help you to either think more deeply about the topic, or to put into practice some of the ideas that you have just learned about. After reading each chapter I recommend you set some time aside to undertake these activities and think carefully about how the points they address relate to your library context. This book by necessity takes a very general approach to EDI topics and leaves it up to you to see which areas are most important in your library.

The book is divided into chapters by topic rather than by library context. Throughout each chapter advice for school and public libraries sits alongside that for university and health libraries. In many contexts the advice and guidance is similar across all of these settings, however some chapters are more applicable to some librarians than others. Although some chapters may seem less relevant to your role, I hope you will find key ideas throughout which can be applied to your specific context.

Chapter 1 ('First Steps') introduces some of the language used within EDI work. It will help you think about how your experience and characteristics influence how you approach this work and briefly addresses some of the current political difficulties in this space. I recommend that readers start with this chapter. After Chapter 1 the chapters are fairly independent, and while the book has been written in narrative form, feel free to dip into the chapters which are most important to you.

Chapters 2 ('Compliance and Beyond') and 3 ('Policies and Actions') cover organisational level issues around EDI. Depending on your role you may have more or less ability to make change in compliance matters and EDI policies. Regardless, these are important areas for everyone to understand, not least because they are the areas you can use to put pressure on those more senior than you.

Chapter 4 discusses inclusive staff environments, but can unfortunately only skim the surface of such a big topic. I particularly concentrate on hiring practices, and strongly recommend the work of Fair Library Jobs if you want to learn more about this area.

Chapters 5, 6 and 7 address the experience of library users, giving guidance on making collections and buildings inclusive and accessible. Chapter 7 in particular delves into decolonisation, how we can start to rethink what we collect, and how we collect and display it.

Chapters 8 and 9 cover topics that are very close to my heart as an academic librarian: research support, and conferences and events. Chapter 8 advises on all sorts of ways of supporting research, including making sure any research you carry out is conducted in an ethical and inclusive manner. Chapter 9 covers conferences and any speaking event you might be organising, for example visits from authors or children's story time.

Chapter 10 covers training, which while addressed occasionally throughout the book warrants its own chapter. Really, as with so many other chapters here, it warrants its own book. The training chapter won't give you all the answers, but will hopefully put you on the right path to look at the training already provided at your library and assess whether it is covering everything you might like it to.

The book ends with some final thoughts from me. But really, this is just the beginning of your journey, not the end. I'd encourage you to dive into the further reading sections and to look up the resources referenced throughout the book. Remember that working in EDI is a continual practice of listening and learning, even for those of us who have been working in this space for some time.