Public Services Council Meeting of February 28, 2023

Attending: Salwa Ismail, Beth Dupuis, Susan McElrath, Naomi Shiraishi, Lynne Grigsby, Nicole Brown, Blake Lindsey, Hilary Schiraldi, Patrick Shannon, Ayaka Sato, Mark Marrow, Ellen Dario, Kris Kasianovitz, Dan Vaccaro, Misha Coleman, Jennifer Osgood, Dave Wong

Welcoming new members

Introductions and welcoming our newest members: Misha Coleman (Sciences Council representative) and Dan Vaccaro (Communications representative).

Future projects and discussion ideas

PSC members were asked to discuss with their units and councils ideas for future public services issues that PSC might address this year, and add their ideas to a suggestions document. Some members mentioned scheduling these discussions with their groups in March, and new ideas can be added to this running document or sent to the PSC co-chairs anytime.

Nicole shared the process that the Instruction Services Division used to generate ideas. In one meeting they spent about 15 minutes generating individual ideas that they submitted via a simple Google form. The discussion leader organized all the ideas prior to a second meeting at which they spent another 15 minutes responding to the ideas previously generated and organizing them into a core list. Collectively they suggested about 20 ideas that covered a broad range of public services areas, and organized those into areas related to: gathering user insights, reexamining policies, looking inward to PSC's structures and processes, improving spaces and wayfinding, building staff support systems, and improving safety and security.

Suggestions about some of the key areas to address highlighted the interconnectedness of units. Not all the suggestions may be in the purview of the Public Services Council alone, and in many cases the ideas would be best directed to another unit or group to do some initial analysis to recommend next steps or actions.

Several people noted the importance of coordination and communication across various Library groups to use everyone's time most effectively. For example a Library Equity & Inclusion subgroup is working on some issues related to spaces, and the APriCot group is working on some issues related to UC Library Search. It would be useful to make improvements related to these specific ideas and also the simplifying and clarifying the processes Library staff can use to continue to address future issues. Communication includes the dual components of the right to know information (transparency) and the responsibility for keeping informed (awareness).

The review of suggested issues raises interesting questions about the charge for PSC. Traditionally other groups have brought recommendations to PSC and it has served as an advisory group, though there has been less call for that role in the past couple of years. As we consider how to make progress with the suggestions raised today, we may also find that PSC should reshape how it operates so we can realize some of the ideas.

Public services policies

Carefully developed policies can help ensure quality library service that provides for community needs, wise use of library resources, and fair treatment of library staff and library users. The Library has policies listed on our public website and our staff website, and each list includes some related to public services. Every policy has a history of why it was written, often in an attempt to be clear with library users and staff about practices so we can be consistent rather than arbitrary. It is valuable to review them to determine in what ways they need to be refreshed (if outdated, inaccurate information, etc) or if they should be retired. In reviewing the policy we may also find that we suggest a further step of reviewing or refreshing other practices to which the policy relates.

Desired outcomes include:
- A curated group of updated policies meaningful for operations and public services
- Policies reflecting our Library values and advancing our mission
- Policies reviewed through an equity lens to consider the impact on diverse user populations, and reduce or eliminate barriers
- Policies retired that are not reflective of current needs or approaches
- Policies written clearly and succinctly to be most useful to staff and library users
- Policies easily discoverable by staff and library users

Once the policies are reviewed and refreshed, PSC members suggested: revising how to make the policies easier for the public to find; creating a cheat sheet for student library employees to refer to policy information about the most common issues (e.g., food and drink, animals in the library); adding a link to the public policies from the staff policies page; and incorporating information about the policies into the LibAnswers FAQs.

By Monday, March 28, PSC members are asked to review the list of public services policies, and using the comment feature in Google Docs:

1) Using the comment feature, indicate suggestions for policies to review (indicating aspects to be refreshed or reconsidered)
2) Adding to the bottom of the document, indicate any other suggestions (such as new policies to document; other practices to evaluate; improvements for how the policies are organized, made discoverable, or presented to be more useful to staff and users; etc.)

PSC should review this document before the next meeting in March and add comments on the document. Following that feedback, PSC will be updated at the next meeting, next steps confirmed, and appropriate other library groups will be consulted.

Draft Library Values document

Susan Swarts and Nicole Brown sent an email to libstaff@ on February 21, 2023 calling for feedback to the draft Library Values statement. PSC members discussed their initial reactions and observations about the values statement and how they see that applying to their work and to public services. PSC members were encouraged to submit their individual feedback and insights via the form by Wednesday, March 1.