



Stewart Library Equity-Minded Policy and Practice Audit: Year One Report (2021-2022)

Between April 2021 and May 2022, Stewart Library staff, faculty, and administrators participated in a series of workshops focused on developing an equity-minded, anti-racist, and anti-oppressive practice. These action-oriented workshops served as the foundation for the ongoing work of critically analyzing our library policies and practices and implementing substantive change. This process supports [Weber State University's Strategic Plan](#).

The WSU Strategic Plan's Equity Framework outlines several requirements for an equity-minded practice, including: "Recognition that the elimination of structural racism in institutions of higher education requires intentional **critical deconstruction of structures, policies, practices, norms and values assumed to be race neutral**. (Witham, K., Malcolm-Piqueux, L. E., Dowd, A. C., & Bensimon, E. M. [America's Unmet Promise: The Imperative for Equity in Higher Education](#), 2015, emphasis added.)

An equity-minded audit is one way to do that critical deconstruction. The library is using this approach, rather than focusing only on quantitative benchmarking, for a number of reasons. The library intersects with the student learning experience in multiple ways, across many functions. Our role is to help create conditions that promote student learning and advance equitable outcomes. We acknowledge that our practices and policies might create unintended barriers and inequities for historically marginalized groups, including BIPOC and low income students in particular. A critical analysis of traditional practice and formal policy is best suited for the library's specific role in the university.

The library hired consultants with academic library expertise and experience. It was critical to work with consultants who understand the specific history and context of libraries in higher education. Our consultants utilized a design justice framework. This framework aligns with the [USHE Equity Lens Framework](#), which proposes beginning with the following questions when making policy and practice decisions:

- Does the policy, practice or decision being made maintain, sustain, or intervene in existing educational disparities, or does it produce other unintended consequences?
- What is the impact of this policy, practice, or decision on eliminating attainment gaps?
- How does the policy, practice, or decision, etc. advance opportunities for historically underserved students and communities?
- What are the barriers to more equitable outcomes?

In year one, we focused on the "Assess" step in an initial review of policy and practice in three focused areas: post-pandemic library operations, collection development, and human resources.

The following provides an overview of the process, recommendations by consultants Sofia Leung, Jennifer Brown, and Rebecca Martin from [Do Better, Be Better LLC](#) (DBBB), a summary of the policies and practices reviewed and examples of proposed changes to date, and a timeline for the ongoing process and goals for Year Two (2022-2023).

I. Overview of Process and Consultant Recommendations

The first year of Stewart Library's equity audit focused on assessing our current state of knowledge and practice and building capacity for the ongoing and iterative process of building an equity-minded, anti-racist, and anti-oppressive library practice. The library hired external consultants for a series of iterative, educational, and action-oriented workshops. We chose three areas of policy and practice to focus on: post-pandemic library operations, collection development, and human resources. The consultants facilitated three sets of workshops:

- Foundations: All participants attended these workshops that introduced critical race theory, white supremacy culture characteristics, with specific attention to how whiteness and racism has operated and continues to operate in libraries.
- Designing Policy: Three separate applied action workshops introduced participants to Design Justice principles and then helped participants draft vision and policy statements in the areas of post-pandemic operations, collection development, and human resources.
- Assessment and Accountability: Two workshops, focused on post-pandemic operations and collection development, introduced concepts of equitable, inclusive and justice-oriented accountability and assessment practices.

In their final report, the DBBB consultants found that the library is still in a developmental stage of equity-minded practice (see Appendix A). The consultants recommended the following next steps to build capacity for equity-minded work:

- Debrief year one of the equity audit to reflect on lessons learned and the impact of engagement so far. Use the debriefing process to synthesize and share learning with the rest of the library staff and faculty who did not participate. Identify next steps as part of the debriefing process.
- Library leadership "should clarify for all library faculty and staff community members that focusing on process is the central, foundational key to adopting new policy creation practices. The goal is not to institutionalize the policy creation processes DBBB has presented, but to recognize elements of equitable processes and to test the assumptions leading to any decision making."
- Develop a public statement of commitment that recognizes that while we are not experts on the concepts learned in the workshops, our commitment to the process will drive this work forward in the absence of consultants.
- Develop an onboarding process for new employees that incorporates the principles developed in the workshops.
- Establish a community practice, accountability partners, and/or other ways to deepen the learning and continue the work.

Building on the materials provided by our consultants in the workshops and the [USHE Equity Lens Framework](#), we developed a draft framework to continue both the reflection and learning required and to guide ongoing review and design of policy and practice. This is a draft and living document that invites feedback and revision: [Stewart Library Equity-Minded Practice Framework](#).

II. Revised Policies and Practices

Some of these policies and practices were analyzed as part of the applied action workshops and some were developed prior to or after the workshops. For a more detailed discussion of the design justice principles used, see Appendix B.

A. COVID mitigation strategies for 2021-2023 academic year.

Background:

With the university shifting back to predominantly in-person and full capacity physical spaces, should the library continue the following practices?:

- Curbside delivery of library materials.
- Reservable, socially-distanced study spaces.
- Dedicated Proctorio testing rooms.
- Reduce in-person service and shift to online services when transmission rates are high.

Decision:

- The second floor, south wing was kept as reservable, socially-distanced seating.
- Two Proctorio rooms were kept on the reservation schedule.
- Curbside delivery was maintained, with reduced hours from 2020 levels.
- The contingency staffing plan, with guaranteed in-person services between 10 am and 2 pm), was implemented in January and February 2022 in response to the surge in COVID cases.
- Staggered schedules, remote work options, and private offices were provided for public facing staff when needed.

Rationale:

We determined that continuing pre-pandemic services and practices, such as reservable study spaces and curbside delivery, was essential to students with high health risks and with care responsibilities, which often have disparate burdens on BIPOC and low income students. Their needs were centered in order for them to have guaranteed access to socially-distanced library spaces and services.

B. Service desk staffing model revision.

Background:

Stewart Library staffs four public services desks in the Ogden Campus building: Circulation on the first floor, Reference on the second floor, University Archives on the first floor, and Special Collections on the third floor. Patrons often experience the “Weber Shuffle,” being handed off from service desk to service desk, receiving suboptimal service and potentially making the library inaccessible and unwelcoming. BIPOC patrons also experience library service provided by a predominantly white staff.

Decisions:

- Circulation Services (responsible for the first floor service desk) and Teaching and Information Services (responsible for the second floor service desk) are cross-training and cross-scheduling student employees in order to provide a common, core set of services and expertise at each desk. The service desks are also being renamed (Circulation to Services Desk; Reference to Research and Tech Help Desk), so that their purpose is more clear to patrons.
- University Archives and Special Collections will continue to operate a single reading room on the first floor and look for other ways to merge services into a single department.

- The library is also developing HR policies and practices (see below) that help recruit and retain more BIPOC library employees, including student employees.

Rationale:

Plain language and the removal of specialized and strictly-enforced divisions of labor and departmental silos will enable library users to get more transparent and immediate assistance, no matter their library knowledge or where they first approach staff for help.

C. Eliminate most library fines for overdue materials.

Background:

The library eliminated fines in 2019 for many overdue materials, with the exception of laptops and other equipment, course reserves, and interlibrary loan materials. Automatic renewals were also implemented at this time. In 2022, the Resource Sharing and Course Materials department proposed eliminating late fines on course reserves materials as well.

Decision:

In June 2022, the library eliminated fines for the late return of course reserve materials. The only remaining late fines are for interlibrary loan materials, which are set by the lending library. Replacement costs are charged for material that is not returned.

Rationale:

Library fees are a known deterrent to library use in public libraries, especially for low income patrons, and the same likely holds true in the academic context. Registration holds can be a barrier to retention and completion and place administrative burdens on vulnerable students.

D. Collection Development Policy

Background:

The library's collection development policy was outdated, having last been revised in the 1990s. The old policy focused on traditional library metrics and standards, such as collecting depth and scope determined by the size of program enrollments and number of faculty. The old policy lacked any consideration of historic exclusions, especially of BIPOC and LGBTQ people, from traditional knowledge-making and publishing practices. The old policy excluded textbooks and other course materials from its collecting scope.

Decision:

The Collection Management team revised the entire Collection Development Policy ([Draft Version](#)). The draft policy will be posted on the library website, along with instructions to provide feedback in Fall 2022. Subject librarians will also communicate with departments throughout the fall to gather feedback.

Rationale:

Revisions included:

- The goal of increasing the diversity of the collection and proactively addressing historic erasures in the collection because of racism and other forms of oppression.
- Definitions of success that center learning and research outcomes rather than traditional metrics such as number of titles.

- The goal of promoting affordable course materials for students, even if these materials fall outside of traditional collecting models.
- Removal of gatekeeping practices that privileged the role of subject-expert librarians. Subject librarians still retain a strong role, but the policy now explicitly empowers other library staff with collection management responsibilities to contribute their expertise to collection decisions and respond directly to patron requests.

E. Human Resources Policies and Practices

Background:

The library has been reviewing a range of HR practices related to recruitment and hiring, salary equity, professional development benefits, and work supports (flexible scheduling, remote work, etc.) since 2017. While the library has made some progress in salary equity and staff representation on Library Council, there is still much work to be done to create more equitable policies and practices for current staff and to recruit, retain, and support the flourishing of BIPOC library employees in all job categories. Ninety-three percent of library staff and 91% of faculty are white. We are currently working with HR to get a demographic profile for our student employees. This affects all of the equity-minded efforts in the library. BIPOC students, faculty, staff and community members often do not see themselves when they use the library and interact with library employees and decisions are most often made by people, including the Dean of the Library, with a narrow range of experience and the positional power and privileges of whiteness. **Human resources policies and practices are, therefore, the most consequential for equitable and just policy creation and service design.** Given the scale of this work and need for broad campus collaboration, the workshops focused on a broad vision for HR work, rather than specific policies. Those policies will be a primary focus of work in 2023.

Decisions:

Below is a summary of the HR policies and practices that have been revised since 2018.

- **Salary equity model** developed. The model uses the university pay grades to determine a target salary (based on reaching the middle of the grade in 10 years). All staff are provided an updated target salary annually and the library average (percentage to target). If equity funding is available, those below the library average are prioritized for raises. This work has resulted in all staff reaching at least 90% of target salary in FY22. A goal for FY23 is to work with HR to see if refinements to the model based on market benchmarks will advance equity in the library. There are issues with market salaries for library workers being low and replicating larger societal devaluation of library work when using such benchmarks.
- **Equitable staff benefits for professional development.** All library staff and faculty receive the same professional development allowance of \$1,500 annually and the autonomy to use it as they see fit, within broad guidelines to align professional development with the library and WSU strategic goals.
- **Flexible and remote work options and technology support.** Staff receive the same opportunities to work with their supervisors to develop remote and flexible schedule options, as long as core, in-person responsibilities are adequately staffed, with appropriate backup. Staff also receive the same technology start-up packages as faculty.
- **Model language for job postings** developed that emphasize an asset-based rather than a deficit and “weeding out” approach. These have been used in searches for both faculty and staff since 2020. This language emphasizes that we are looking for a combination of experience and education rather than a “check all the boxes” approach designed to eliminate candidates. Required qualifications are kept at a minimal level and a related job experience is valued as

much as formal credentials for most positions. Spanish-language skills are now a preferred qualification in all job postings. We will continue to revise this language with feedback from stakeholders and the Division of Equity, Diversity and Inclusion.

- Interview practices have also been altered to use a more asset-based approach, including sending interview questions prior to interviews to enable them to prepare and provide thoughtful responses. All candidates meet with the Dean of the Library, who communicates the various supports for equitable pay and benefits, flexible and humane working conditions, and campus and community support services.

III. Goals for FY2023 and FY2024

- Implement recommendations of consultants for building capacity across library staff and faculty to continue the work of developing equity-minded and anti-racist practice, including debriefing sessions, a community of practice, and accountability and reflection partners. To borrow a phrase from Estela Bensimon (2020), most library staff, faculty, and administrators are “first-generation equity practitioners.”
- Begin the process of building relationships with key community stakeholders and patrons, particularly BIPOC students, faculty, and staff. Explore ways to develop participatory design and accountability practices that center the voices of BIPOC and other historically excluded groups and compensate these partners for their work.
- Work with the Division of Equity, Diversity and Inclusion, Human Resources, and the Faculty Senate EDI Committee to review, improve, and expand equitable and just hiring and retention practices.
- Review and revise all existing formal library policies using the draft [Stewart Library Framework for Equitable and Anti-Oppressive Practice](#) and further refine and improve the framework as part of this process. Create a clear and publicly-available Library Policy and Procedures Manual.
- Review the current instructional model for information literacy using the [Stewart Library Framework for Equitable and Anti-Oppressive Practice](#) as a primary lens. Identify potential harms and barriers to student learning and success for BIPOC and low income students in particular, including analysis of disaggregated data (by race/ethnicity, first-generation status, and Pell-eligibility) on the information literacy general education requirement across different course models (LIBS 1704, subject-specific courses, ENGL 2015, concurrent enrollment). Questions to explore include potential differences in the timing of course completion (before 30 credits or after), DFW rates, and whether taking an integrated information literacy course (e.g. ENGL 2015) makes a difference in completion of the information literacy and/or composition general education requirements. Develop a plan, including a potentially revised instructional model, to mitigate potential harms and eliminate disparities in educational attainment by race and socioeconomic status.

References

- Bensimon, E. M., & Gray, J. (2020). First-Generation equity practitioners: Are they part of the problem? *Change: The Magazine of Higher Learning*, 52(2), 69–73.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/00091383.2020.1732790>

Appendix A: Observations and Recommendations from audit consultants

- Staff comments and discussions exhibited a lack of specificity in language throughout the engagement. Staff should work on being explicit (e.g. naming racism, white supremacy, etc.), saying what we really mean (e.g. communities of color), and not trying to sugar coat things.
- Staff expressed interest in the concept of accountability with users, but comments, discussions, and ideas reflected a continued focus on transactional behavior with library users/communities during Accountability workshops. Staff should work on centering the concept of ongoing, longer-term relationship with library users/communities.
- Several staff across workshops indicated the “small is all” principle from Emergent Strategy is resonating heavily with them. Library Council and other leaders may want to leverage this resonance as they consider creating organizational practices that support staff engagement.
- Several staff across workshops indicated (un)learning a “sense of urgency” would be a challenge. Library Council and other leaders may want to leverage some suggested antidotes to this characteristic of white supremacy culture by incorporating questions like “does this decision have to be made immediately?” and “who needs to be involved?” into policy creation and decisions. The more discussions that explore impact over intent that occur earlier in and throughout the process, the less chance for harmful impact later in the process.

Appendix B: Detailed Decision Rationales

A. Post Pandemic Operations

Primary Design Justice Principles and Guiding Questions	
<p>We use design to sustain, heal, and empower our communities, as well as to seek liberation from exploitive and oppressive systems. We prioritize the design’s impact on the community over the intention of the designer.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How will this land differently on people with different positionalities? • Whose safety and comfort is centered? • Who will carry the burden of this decision (e.g., time, labor, stress, etc.)? Will those who are marginalized carry more of it? 	
Potential Inequitable Impacts or Harms for Specific Communities	Groups Consulted and/or Included in Design
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People with high risk health conditions. Racial inequities in health care make these potential harms more likely for BIPOC people. • Students with heavy work and care responsibilities. Racial, gender, and class inequities make these harms more likely for women, low income students, BIPOC students and those at the intersections of these identities. • Students who lack high speed internet and/or private spaces for remote proctoring at home. • Public-facing staff who have less flexibility for remote work and higher levels of public interaction. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public facing staff, including student employees. • Users of the space reservation system, Proctorio rooms, and curbside service who provided feedback on the positive impact of those services in 2020. • Campus administration. • See assessment and accountability plans below to address gaps in consultation/inclusion.
Decisions and Rationale	
<p>Continued to provide all of COVID mitigation strategies. The second floor, south wing was kept as reservable, socially-distanced seating. Two Proctorio rooms were kept on the reservation schedule. Curbside delivery was maintained, with some shortening of hours. The contingency staffing plan, with guaranteed in-person services, was implemented in January and February 2022 in response to the surge in COVID cases. Staggered schedules, remote work options, and private offices were provided for public facing staff when needed.</p>	
Assessment/Accountability	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build relationships with the Disability Office to ensure that future service decisions provide equitable access to students with health risks and disabilities. 	

- Debrief with public facing employees, including student employees, to address any issues that arose with staffing burdens and options for remote work when needed.
- Continue to review feedback from users of curbside delivery. Explore methods for identifying non-users of the service to identify potential barriers.
- Build relationships with BIPOC students, through Student Affairs Access and Diversity, Student Involvement and Leadership, the Student Library Advisory Council, and the Division of Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion, to identify additional potential harms and methods of accountability.

B. Service desk staffing model revision.

Primary Design Justice Principles and Guiding Questions	
<p>We use design to sustain, heal, and empower our communities, as well as to seek liberation from exploitive and oppressive systems. We prioritize the design’s impact on the community over the intention of the designer.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Will this decision ultimately lead to a more equitable environment? ● Will this decision create or exacerbate any inequities that will need to be addressed later? ● Am I using my power to enact change that will benefit those with less power? ● Who will carry the burden of this decision (e.g., time, labor, stress, etc.)? Will those who are marginalized carry more of it? <p>We center the voices of those who are directly impacted by the outcomes of the design process.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Are those potentially impacted the most by this decision involved in the decision making in some way? Have I taken the necessary time to hear and thoughtfully consider their STATED (not assumed) needs? 	
Potential Inequitable Impacts or Harms for Specific Communities	Groups Consulted and/or Included in Design
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Time-constrained students with heavy work and care responsibilities. Racial, gender, and class inequities make these harms more likely for women, low income students, BIPOC students, and those at the intersections of these positions. ● First-generation students. Knowing how libraries work and where to get help is part of the “hidden curriculum.” Library jargon and departmental silos center the perspective of library staff/faculty rather than our patrons. ● BIPOC students who see few people who look like them working at library service desks and/or who might have 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Public-facing staff, including student employees, who provided feedback on their perceptions of the “Weber Shuffle” and who also face staffing challenges with multiple service points. ● See assessment and accountability plans below to address gaps in consultation/inclusion.

experienced surveillance and racism in libraries and other predominantly white spaces.	
Decisions and Rationale	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • University Archives and Special Collections will continue to operate a single reading room on the first floor and look for other ways to merge services into a single department. • Circulation Services and Teaching and Information Services are cross-training and cross-scheduling student employees in order to provide a common, core set of services and expertise at each desk. • The library is also developing HR policies and practices (see below) that help recruit and retain more BIPOC library employees, including student employees. 	
Assessment/Accountability	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The library has very little information on what our non-users experience as barriers to library services. We also have very little information on perceptions of belonging by BIPOC students in particular. Building relationships with these groups of students is a central element of equity-minded assessment practice and a major library goal for the next few years. • Develop baseline data for racial/ethnic diversity of library employees, including student workers, develop a numerical goal to increase representation of BIPOC employees, assess annually, and revise HR practices until the goal is met. 	

C. Eliminate most library fines for overdue materials.

Primary Design Justice Principles and Guiding Questions	
<p>We prioritize the design’s impact on the community over the intention of the designer.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are those with dominant identities the primary beneficiaries of this decision? • How will this land differently on people with different positionalities? Whose safety and comfort is centered? • Who will carry the burden of this decision (e.g., time, labor, stress, etc.)? Will those who are marginalized carry more of it? • What harm might be done by this decision? Do I have a specific plan to address or mitigate potential harm? 	
Potential Inequitable Impacts or Harms for Specific Communities	Groups Consulted and/or Included in Design
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Late fines reduce access to materials, especially to low income students, who cannot afford accumulated fines and who might not borrow materials at all because of the threat of fines and library holds on registration and other university processes. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Library employees responsible for various parts of the library collection and Circulation Services staff who oversee fine collection. • Library users who provided positive feedback on rollback of late fines in 2019.

Decisions and Rationale
In June 2022, the library eliminated fines for late course reserve materials. The only remaining fines are for interlibrary loan materials, which are set by the lending library. Replacement costs are charged for material that is not returned.
Assessment/Accountability
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Assess the impact of elimination of late fines on course reserve material to see if it increases circulation and does not lead to substantial loss of material, which can harm students who need access to shared course materials in particular. ● Review potential harmful impact of replacement fees on high cost items, such as laptops and consider revision of policy/practice of academic process holds and payment plans.

D. Collection Development Policy

Primary Design Justice Principles and Guiding Questions	
<p>We use design to sustain, heal, and empower our communities, as well as to seek liberation from exploitative and oppressive systems. We prioritize the design’s impact on the community over the intention of the designer.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Will this decision ultimately lead to a more equitable environment? ● Am I using my power to enact change that will benefit those with less power? ● Whose safety and comfort is centered? <p>We honor and uplift traditional, indigenous, and local knowledge and practices.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Have we acknowledged and incorporated the knowledge of historically excluded communities? <p>We center the voices of those who are directly impacted by the outcomes of the design process.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Are those potentially impacted the most by this decision involved in the decision making in some way? Have I taken the necessary time to hear and thoughtfully consider their STATED (not assumed) needs? 	
Specific communities with potential inequitable impacts and/or harms	Groups Consulted and/or Included in Design

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● BIPOC, LGBTQ people, and women (and those with intersecting identities) who are not represented in the library collection. ● Hispanic/Latin X students, faculty, and community members impacted by lack of Spanish language materials. ● Low income students who lack access to affordable course materials. ● Faculty who work in disciplines that produce and publish knowledge outside of traditional publishing systems. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Subject librarians and other library employees responsible for collection management and supporting student course material needs. ● Faculty Library Advisory Committee. ● See assessment and accountability plans below to address gaps in consultation/inclusion.
Decisions and Rationale	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Draft Revised Policy developed. ● Revisions include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The goal of increasing the diversity of the collection and proactively addressing historic erasures in the collection because of racism and other forms of oppression. ○ Definitions of success that center learning and research outcomes rather than traditional metrics such as number of titles. ○ The goal of promoting affordable course materials for students, even if these materials fall outside of traditional collecting models. ○ Removal of gatekeeping practices that privileged the role of subject expert librarians. Subject librarians still retain a strong role, but the policy now explicitly empowers other library staff with collection management responsibilities to contribute their expertise to collection decisions and respond directly to patron requests. 	
Assessment/Accountability	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The draft policy will be posted on the library website, along with instructions to provide feedback in Fall 2022. ● Subject librarians will seek feedback from their departments and library staff with collection development responsibilities will seek feedback from their users and stakeholders. ● The Dean of the Library and the Head of Technical Services and Collection Management will seek feedback on the policy from key stakeholders, especially BIPOC and LGBTQ faculty and students. ● The library will develop a participatory method to benchmark the subject, author, and language diversity of the collection, in collaboration with key stakeholders, especially BIPOC students, faculty and community members. 	