RE-13-19-0051-19 - Syracuse University
Library Services to Patrons with Disabilities: A Problem-Based Learning Approach

This two-year, 2018 Laura Bush 21st Century Librarian *Project Grant-Lifelong Learning, Continuing Education* proposal, <u>with a start date of July 1, 2019</u>, focuses on expanding and enhancing current training available to library and archives professionals for providing effective service to patrons with disabilities. This proposal partners Syracuse University and Califa, a nonprofit library membership consortium, offering continuing education and professional development opportunities to library staff in and out of California through Infopeople. The partners request $229,595 in funding and will costshare an additional $57,204.

Statement of Need. The 2010 US Census reports more than 56 million (19%) people in the U.S. have a disability, more than half identified as a *severe* disability. One in six children in the U.S. has a developmental disability (e.g. ADHD, autism, intellectual disability) (CDC, 2015), constituting large, neurodiverse populations within our schools and communities. ALA's Library Services to People with Disabilities Policy states that "…Libraries play a catalytic role in the lives of people with disabilities by facilitating their full participation in society…." Though librarians exemplify inclusive values and practices, many have not had the opportunity to learn about accessibility issues, assistive technology, the needs of people with disabilities both as users and employees, and laws applicable to the rights of people with disabilities as they impact library services. Various providers of professional development, from national library organizations to individual libraries and library systems have tried to provide sufficient training to fill the knowledge gap, but the gap remains huge; e.g., through its IMLS-funded *Targeting Autism* program, the Illinois State Library has provided group forums, small group workshops and individual coaching to 200 librarians throughout Illinois, yet this represents only ¼ of the state's librarians expressing a need for this training. IMLS-funded *Project ENABLE* (<u>E</u>xpanding <u>N</u>on-discriminatory <u>A</u>ccess <u>B</u>y <u>L</u>ibrarians <u>E</u>verywhere) provides asynchronous online training to thousands of librarians nationwide, yet many thousands more remain deficient in this area and there is no national "conversation," in which librarians can share and discuss issues and ideas with each other and their communities.

Project Description and Work Plan. The proposed project brings together a diverse team of experts from Project ENABLE (PE) in partnership with Infopeople and in collaboration with members of the Targeting Autism team, an advisory board of librarians and disabilities experts, and 24 participating library practitioners. Together, they will produce a series of authentic problem-based videos with related support materials and online interaction options throughout the duration of the project, including a discussion board, email newsletter, blog, and an online self-paced train-the-trainer course for librarians and library staff. The videos, support and community created will greatly maximize the number of individuals who are able to learn, share and discuss how to meet the challenge of providing high quality library services to *all* patrons.

This project intends not only to offer free disabilities training but also the opportunity to communicate, interact and share their knowledge gained from their learning experiences with each other and their communities, addressing existing and future professional development needs in the area of libraries and disabilities. This project teams Syracuse University (*Dr. Ruth Small*, director of Project ENABLE, and *Dr. Marilyn Arnone*, award-winning video producer), an Infopeople team of online course producers/discussion leaders, Targeting Autism leaders and a distinguished advisory committee of library leaders and disabilities experts (*Suzanne Schriar*, director of *Targeting Autism* (IL); *Daniel Weiss*, Co-Founder of *Autism and Libraries: We're Connected* (NJ); *Kate Deibel*, Inclusion & Accessibility Librarian, Syracuse University Libraries (NY) *Russ Bonanno*, CEO, LifeDesigns, Inc. (IN); *William Myhill*, Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Coordinator, Syracuse University (NY); and *Sue Kowalski*, Librarian, Pine Grove Middle School (NY).) Together, we propose to design, develop, evaluate and implement unique training opportunities for librarians.

Training components include a ***set of <u>eight (8)</u> "trigger videos"*** (2-5 minute videos intended to stimulate thinking and active discussions to solve problems/make decisions rel accessibility and inclusion) featuring *24 diverse, practicing professional librarians* (public, school or academic) describing authentic, common challenges faced when serving patrons with disabilities and "tried & true" ideas for meeting those challenges. These videos will be reinforced and extended by (1) a ***selection of instructional support materials*** (e.g., handouts, PowerPoints, activities, assessments) to be used at relevant points in the training; (2) **a *newsletter*** distributed periodically during the grant that summarizes discussions, provides updated information and raises awareness of relevant topics, (3) an ***online course*** based on the video situations and developed/delivered by

Infopeople, in collaboration with the Syracuse team and advisory board, facilitated live twice during the grant period, that will support and expand train-the-trainer opportunities (and made available as a self-paced option later in the 2 year grant period); (4) a *series of synchronous online webinars and synchronous discussions*, recorded and archived for future access, and *a blog***,** all intended to provide ongoing follow-up in building a virtual community of practice that engages stakeholders for the purpose of sharing strategies and best practice through synchronous, interactive online experiences, facilitated by experts on libraries and disabilities, and (5) using information gained from discussions and the online course above to develop three *train-the-trainer planning and design guidelines* (academic, school, public), for selecting and integrating the project's videos, materials, discussions and other interactive experiences into customized, face-to-face, online, and/or blended training designs for internal delivery by a library or library system,.

Goals and Outcomes. Project goals and outcomes are: *Goal 1:* Introduction to a variety of common challenges librarians from various types of libraries face when serving patrons with disabilities and potential solutions to those challenges. *Outcome:* Participating librarians will profess increased confidence in their ability to effectively serve the library and information needs of their patrons with disabilities. *Goal 2:* Mastery of application of Universal Design/Universal Design for Learning principles to effectively solve challenges to serving library patrons with disabilities. *Outcome:* Demonstrated ability by participating librarians to provide equitable access and inclusive library services & accommodations. *Goal 3:* Expansion of sustainable online professional development to foster inclusive library practices. *Outcome:* Increased nationwide usage of project resources, training, and discussions offered through project partners.

Diversity. While this project focuses on the diversity of varying abilities, it will also seek inclusivity through gender, race, and ethnicity (e.g., video participants, advisory board, partnering teams).

Impact. This project will increase the cultural competencies of librarians nationwide and serve as a national model of collaboration and as a trusted resource for training library staff to provide inclusive library service to patrons with disabilities. Use of the project's free training videos, materials, online social and learning spaces, courses, webinars, blog, and online discussion forums will advance widespread application of inclusive policies and best practices in libraries. In addition to a range of planned project dissemination initiatives by the project team, the 24 diverse librarian participants and advisory board will contribute to the dissemination of project information to their communities and to the profession. Library staff facilitation of community conversations will also pave the way for increased awareness of inclusive practices in libraries.

Sustainability. Previous evidence of ongoing commitment to this initiative beyond a grant period has been demonstrated by updates and additions by the Project ENABLE team since its funding ceased in 2012. Commitment and support will continue after the requested funding period has ended. This commitment includes: (1) continuation of the project's online communities of practice (e.g., archived webinars, discussions, blog) to support ongoing and new, future conversations by librarians, and (2) the ongoing availability and free use of project video and support resources nationwide.

Estimated Budget. The total requested budget is $229,595; 175,146 in direct and $54,449 in indirect costs. Syracuse personnel costs (PI, co-PI, student assistant) total $99,546 to produce videos, guidelines, blog, support materials, manage/evaluate project. Conference travel costs, advisory board honoraria and librarian participant costs are $35,600. An Infopeople (via Califa) subcontract, including 12 facilitated, archived discussion groups, development/delivery of an online instructor facilitated train-the-trainer course, development and maintenance of appropriate self-paced modules, maintenance of a community of practice during the grant period, creation of materials for facilitating continuing community discussions around inclusiveness and access totals $40,000. In addition to the grant funding, Syracuse will costshare $57,204 in tuition for the student assistant.

References
Association of Specialized, Government and Cooperative Library Agencies (ASGCLA), http://www. ala.org/asgcla/resources/libraryservices**;** Centers for Disease Control (CDC), *Facts About Developmental Disabilities* https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/developmentaldisabilities/facts.html, U.S. Census Bureau Reports (2010). *Nearly 1 in 5 People Have a Disability in the U.S.*, https://www.census.gov/ newsroom/releases/archives/miscellaneous/cb12-134.html.