

Breaking Barriers: becoming an inviting library

Thank you all for participating in Breaking Barriers: becoming an inviting library. The ideas below are the ones you came up with during the session. Great work everyone!

Physical Barriers:

PROBLEMS:

Building

- Not universally accessible
 - Think wheelchairs, visually impaired, arthritis, children, strollers, the guy who broke his leg

Space

- Narrow aisles
- Signage in bad locations
- Signage for the visually challenged
- Clutter

Seating

- Variety

Collections

- For those who are visually impaired or can't hold a book
- Collections that need to be weeded

YOUR SOLUTIONS

- Light – install more lighting in dark corners
- Chairs – a variety of seating – hard, soft, high, low, on wheels, stationary to serve different populations
- Weed!
- Spinners – give them to someone who needed them
- T-loop – for people who are hard of hearing

Geographical Barriers:

PROBLEMS:

Location

- Rural, sparse populations, transportation
 - Is there sufficient parking?
 - Can you get to it without a car?
 - Is there a safe place to leave your bike/stroller/skateboard/scooter

Restricted Mobility

- Hospital
- Incarceration

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- Institutionalization
- Homebound

YOUR SOLUTIONS:

- Materials delivery to the lodge including a deposit collection
- Delivery to penitentiary, hospital, old folks homes, and homes
- Mail-to-patron
- Paperback depository collection in other locations
- Smart Lockers
- Take the Summer Reading Club on the road to rural locations
- Book Bike

Social/Emotional Barriers:

PROBLEMS:

- Yes vs. No
- Patrons feel like library staff don't care
- Teens – loud conversations and touching one another
- Newcomers – feeling of otherness
- Non-users – people who grew up without spending time in the library can be mystified by them

YOUR SOLUTIONS:

- Can't afford a card – give out gift certificates via avenues that will get them to the right people, ie. Welcome Wagon
- School passes and cards – free memberships for the entire family
- Stop, talk, listen – sometimes library staff are the only people a patron speaks to in their otherwise isolated life
- Renew, waive fines, for those who can't bring materials back on time. Give tax receipts for "donations" rather than receipts for fines
- Special needs community
 - Sensory toys, pillows, seating – be exactly the space for kids. Be safe for the kids
 - Adults – read books to them
- Newcomers – cultural festivals to introduce communities to one another and their culture. Break the barriers to create conversation.

Financial Barriers:

PROBLEMS:

- Fees
- Fines
- Suspending Patrons
- Self-identifying that you can't pay
- Homelessness

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- Hours of operation (financial problem for the library itself)

YOUR SOLUTIONS:

- Everyone loves free access
- Participation – read away your fines
- Work programming without fees into your budget
- Find grants – from industry who wants to be associated with what you're doing
- Donations from businesses.

Technological Barriers:

PROBLEMS:

- Lack of assistive technology
- Too many clicks on the website
- Rural internet – not high speed
- Lack of access to devices
- Lack of knowledge to use devices
- Lack of charging stations for the public to use (and spare cords)

YOUR SOLUTIONS:

- Daisy/Victor Readers
- Internet available at library
- Wifi on all the time for after-hours use
- Tech help
- Computer classes where library provides computers/ipad/devices
- Use your regional library's expertise

Cultural Barriers:

PROBLEMS:

- Non-white, western European origins
 - Immigrants – smaller libraries tend to collect and catalogue only English, French, and Spanish
 - Multilingual collection – disbanded, but was old and ratty when it did exist
 - Online collections will have limited accessibility
 - You can order from CPL/EPL, etc., but you can't browse the collection when visiting your own physical library
- Aboriginal, religious minorities, LGBTQI2
 - colonialist approach to cataloguing (Anglo American Cataloguing Rules)
 - aren't the words they use to describe themselves
 - collections reflecting groups are weak

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- uncomfortable asking for help
- Staff
 - May have prejudices against certain patrons

ACTUAL QUOTE HEARD from a library manager:

“I don’t see how that builds communities so we won’t have *those* books”

SOLUTIONS:

- Order from larger libraries
- Newcomer programming (how do we reach these groups to invite them in?)
- Language learning programs
- Use non-Anglophone viewpoints
- Train staff to be appreciate the variety of people who use the library
 - Sensitivity Training

Multiple Catalogues as a Barrier:

PROBLEMS:

- Multiple catalogues that don’t speak to one another
 - results in delays in receiving materials requested outside of your region
 - transportation across a large province
 - patrons don’t understand TAL online
 - Patrons without email in ILS will be unable to sign up for ME card.
 - ultimately, amazon is faster

YOUR SOLUTIONS:

- Me Card – or is it a barrier if not used well
 - If a “junior” in the ILS, they cannot sign up for a ME card on their own
 - Solution: make everyone an “adult”
- One ILS for the entire province

Age as a Barrier:

PROBLEMS:

- Staff – are all your staff little old ladies with nothing in common with young people? Young people who have no patience for little old ladies?
- Children
 - “No baby can choose to go to the library alone”
 - How do we draw caregivers/parents?
 - How about children who are left at the library all day without supervision (or food?)
- Seniors
 - They come with all levels of abilities
 - technical and other

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- We must serve them as individuals, not groups
- Hearing
 - Do you have a sound system? (or a t-loop?)
 - Are programming areas free from other distractions so the program isn't interrupted or difficult to hear?
- Censorship
 - Are there filters on the computers?
 - Are the collections "dumbed down"/missing _____ type of material
 - Do you require a parental consent form for computer use?
 - Do you give parents the right to access their children's borrowing record?

YOUR SOLUTIONS:

- Staff should be open and welcoming
- Provide training to staff to ensure they know how to deal with teens
- Engage teens – build an advocate for life!
- Ask teens for their input
 - Junior board members for course credit
- Use social media to attract a breadth of people to your board (broaden opinions of the board)
- Use a senior liaison to ensure the voice of seniors is heard

Learning Styles as Barriers:

PROBLEMS:

- Silence vs. Noise

YOUR SOLUTIONS:

- Designated computers for various age groups
- Appropriate seating for appropriate age groups – wiggle chairs
- Designated quiet spaces
- Designated noisy spaces
- Inform public of quiet times in the library

Literacy as a Barrier:

PROBLEMS:

- Difficulty reading and understanding resources
- Anxiety/ embarrassment in asking for assistance
- Hi Lo
 - Interfile = lost
 - Separate = "dumb" label

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YOUR SOLUTIONS:

- Hi-Lo – colour code them with dots and an explanation as to their subject
- Talk to the school librarian and have materials with appropriate AR levels (which the kids know)
- Translate the many systems of Hi-Lo designation so staff can help
- Adults – English Language Learners – create a section just for children’s books with accompanying CDs
- Literacy and technology should be focused for the individual rather than broad swaths of people

Library Policies as Barrier:

PROBLEMS:

- “People have trouble understanding/navigating our policies” – quote EPL staff member
 - Don’t know what they are – are there rules against them coming in and behaving the way they do?
 - Don’t know where to find them – not clearly available to people (supposed to have a copy at our front desk – PLSB) but we tend to hide them.
- Mission statement doesn’t reflect the value of equal access for all community members

SOLUTIONS:

- Consult with diverse groups in creating mission, vision, policies, strategic plans, etc.
- Ensure that policies are applied consistently

Hours of Operation:

PROBLEMS:

- Do your open hours reflect when people actually want to use your library?
Hours are NOT for the convenience of the staff

SOLUTIONS:

- Community feedback re: hours
- Open when people aren’t in school or at work.