Inclusive Reading List project

September 2018

Work being undertaken by the Academic Support team in Library Services

For more details about the project please contact your Academic Support Librarian or the Head of Academic Support, Davina Omar: https://www.uwl.ac.uk/library/about-library/our-staff/academic-support-team

UWL library services in partnership with academics in the schools and colleges, is undertaking a project looking at how we might together develop more culturally inclusive reading lists which complement the curriculum. This is in response to concern expressed within the university at the attainment gap between some student demographics, student feedback nationally and our professional commitment to inclusive library collections.

UWL students and staff are very varied in cultural background, and we believe would benefit from having access to a range of course materials that better reflect their cultural experiences, making it easier for them to become more effectively engaged in their studies.

Reading lists are core to the UWL Library collection and dominate our purchasing decisions, both in terms of titles and copies. To ensure we have an inclusive collection, in terms of books, journals and other specialist resources, we need to prioritise the inclusiveness of our reading lists.

Reading lists are developed in collaboration between academic staff and their specialist librarian to underpin the core curriculum and provide students with recommendations to expand their independent reading of their subject area. As part of this project, we want to ensure that reading lists support an inclusive curriculum and that these inclusive and high quality texts, regardless of format, are included in all categories of essential, recommended and further reading. This commitment puts inclusive reading at the heart of the list.

To achieve this aim, library and academic staff are engaged in looking for works written by authors whose cultural and ethnic background reflects that of the students at UWL and who have traditionally been under-represented in selected course materials. We are also looking for works that provide examples, case studies and material within the book that offer a more inclusive context.

The project is not limited to sociological/political contexts in which such issues are often discussed, but in contexts such as healthcare, where students are from varied cultural backgrounds and are also being trained to work in a society which reflects this.

The project involves the librarian and academic looking afresh at the curriculum within the module/course and considering what the role of the reading list is for the students, analysing each text on the reading list to consider how inclusive it is, actively searching for more inclusive texts to add to the reading list in addition or exchange for current texts and looking for examples in the texts that can be highlighted to the students to support aspects of the curriculum.

This work also includes checking the existing library stock within the subject area, external to the current reading list, for works written by authors of a variety of cultural and ethnic background. Another useful part of this task is that we are contacting publishers and making them aware of the inclusive reading lists concept and seeking knowledge of the inclusive nature of their back catalogue.
In addition, we are liaising with colleagues from other HE institutions, who have been already involved in similar work in this area, to gain good practice in this endeavour.

We aim to ensure that the inclusive texts selected for the reading lists are not considered supplementary texts but at the core of supporting the curriculum being covered within the course/module. The Inclusive Reading List work is being undertaken alongside a wider project within the university looking at Inclusive curriculum development and both projects complement and support each other.