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Together We Learn: Collaborating with Medical Students to Build an Online Anti-Racism Collection

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Project Overview

In the summer of 2020, students from the Larner College of Medicine's (LCOM) Social Justice Coalition (SJC) asked if the library could provide support for a project to build a digital collection of anti-racism resources. Specifically, they hoped that the library could host the collection in some kind of digital space and purchase relevant materials when possible. The students would be responsible for the selection and management of the guide's content. After clarification of specific roles and responsibilities, the poster authors agreed to join the project in June 2020. All members of the collaboration felt that a resource addressing topics on race and racism was vitally important to our medical community, specifically titles that pertain to the health sciences. Step one was to agree to a set of specifications for the collection. We then adopted a rapid prototyping process to develop the guide's structure and content. The project team encountered a number of unexpected technical and policy-related challenges during the development phase. These challenges are highlighted in the timeline below, but center around the use of LibGuides to build the portal and interpreting the library's collection development policy. Final decision-making power rested with the SJC students and their advisor with input from the poster authors. The portal was launched in early December, 2020. The LibGuide can be found at: <https://researchguides.uvm.edu/UVMLarnerMedLearnTogether>

Project Outcomes

Primary Outcome:
 The creation and successful launch of the guide.

Secondary Outcomes:

Educational – The students and their advisor gained in-depth knowledge about (1) how the library acquires and provides secure access to resources and (2) LibGuides functionality.

Outreach – The library was able to demonstrate a commitment to support diversity, equity, and inclusion programming (DEI); a topic of growing importance in the LCOM and the University Libraries.

Professional Development – Kate Bright learned how to create and edit content in LibGuides, while both poster authors expanded their knowledge of DEI resources.

Next Steps

One of the SJC's visions for the collection is for it to grow over time. The following ideas have been proposed to accomplish that goal:

Relaunch the guide – The original launch was overshadowed by the COVID-19 outbreak. Relaunching the guide may help boost visibility.

Expand Methods to Contribute – The "Suggest a Resource" function is a good start, but are there other ways that people can contribute content to the guide?

Increase Exposure – The SJC has asked if a permanent link to the guide can be posted on the library's webpage in order to reach a larger audience.

Create Related Programming – E.g. a joint Dana/SJC book group could focus on one book title from the collection.

