Trans-aware customer service

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Why “trans-aware”? 

• Trans customers should not be an afterthought
• Proactively create trans-inclusive library services
• Signal to trans customers that they are valued
Outline

• The basics:
  – sex and gender
  – the gender binary
  – common terminology

• Trans-aware library services:
  – library management systems
  – confidentiality
  – interpersonal interactions
The basics: sex and gender

"Sex" refers to the biological and physiological characteristics that define men and women.

"Gender" refers to the socially constructed roles, behaviours, activities, and attributes that a given society considers appropriate for men and women.

World Health Organisation
(http://apps.who.int/gender/whatisgender/en/)
The basics: binary gender

• We are **assigned** male or female at birth – not “born male” or “born female”

• These are **binary genders**: we are generally taught that someone can only be one or the other
The basics: multifaceted identities

The Gender Unicorn

Gender Identity:
- Female / Woman / Girl
- Male / Man / Boy
- Other Gender(s)

Gender Expression:
- Feminine
- Masculine
- Other

Sex Assigned at Birth:
- Female
- Male
- Other / Intersex

Physically Attracted to:
- Women
- Men
- Other Gender(s)

Emotionally Attracted to:
- Women
- Men
- Other Gender(s)

To learn more, go to: www.transstudent.org/gender

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Trans Student Educational Resources

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The basics: terminology

Cisgender/cis
- Cis man
- Cis woman

Transgender/trans
- Trans man
- Trans woman

Non-binary
- Transsexual
- Genderqueer
- Agender
- Bigender
- Genderfluid
The basics: terminology

Medical → Transition → Social

Gender assigned at birth → Something else

not

One binary gender (male/female) → The other binary gender (male/female)
Applying the basics

• Where do we hold data that relates to a customer’s gender?
  – Think beyond “gender” fields
  – Take confidentiality seriously

• When do we refer to a customer’s gender?
  – Direct address
  – Third-person reference: pronouns (he/she/they etc.)
Library management systems

• How can a customer update the personal details on their library record?
  – Staff interface
  – Self-service interface
  – Library website

• Can library staff give confident and accurate advice on this?
Library management systems

- Non-binary inclusion for existing customers and new applicants:
  - Gender field
  - Title field

relevant/necessary?
Confidentiality

How can you prevent trans customers from being ‘outed’? Think about:

– Old documents showing previous names or titles (invoice letters, notes relating to previous incidents, photocopies of guest users’ identity documents…)
– Staff asking colleagues for advice
– Handling complaints or feedback

Do you have procedures in place?
Interpersonal situations

• Confidence and familiarity

• Describing/addressing customers
  – Use gender-neutral language/descriptors
  – Avoid ‘Sir’ and ‘Madam’

• Toilets
  – Make no assumptions
  – Responding to complaints:
    1. Establish basis of complaint
    2. If no harassment has occurred, stand up for trans customers
    3. Signpost complainer elsewhere – don’t penalise trans customers

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Signals of inclusion

• Normalise pronoun requests
• Include all letters of LGBT
• Inclusive documentation, policies, forms etc. (‘they’ rather than ‘he/she’)
• Toilets

T-shirt courtesy of Action for Trans Health: http://www.ebay.co.uk/usr/act4transhealth
Further resources

- Stonewall workplace resources
- Government Equalities Office, Recruiting and retaining transgender staff: a guide for employers
- Equality Act 2010: overview and definitions of harassment
- GIRES (Gender Identity Research & Education Society)
- Gendered Intelligence

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