# **Things to Consider When Designing an Audit**

The following are questions that Tredway Library had to consider when designing and implementing a diversity audit of library resources at Augustana College. Considering your own answers to these questions may help streamline the workload and avoid potential difficulties throughout the process.

## **Before Beginning the Audit**

### **What will the scope of the audit be? How much of the collection is feasible to assess?**

##### Libraries and the size of their collections vary widely across different contexts. If you have a larger library, consider auditing one or two sections, collections, formats, smaller publication date time frames, etc. If you have a smaller library, you may be able to do a larger audit depending on time and staff.

##### Tredway Library at Augustana college chose to focus on our print books, specifically those written by a single-author and published from the year 2000 to present.

### **What elements of diversity do you want to assess for?**

##### There are many different elements of a person’s identity that could give them a unique perspective on the subject matter upon which they write. These could include factors such as their gender, sexuality, or race / ethnicity - the three elements assessed in Tredway Library’s audit. But diversity can also include factors such as an author’s religion, socioeconomic status, and differences in ability, among many others. It is up to your library to decide which elements you wish to assess within your collection(s) and what makes sense for your overall audit goals.

### **Who is going to be responsible for gathering the data?**

##### Technical services and circulation staff are excellent resources to run reports and talk through any barriers that may appear with gathering information from the library’s Integrated Library System (ILS). Individuals responsible for collection development and acquisitions may also wish to contribute to the review process. Tredway Library additionally trained student workers to participate in the data collection process, who also contributed valuable insights to our discussions throughout.



### **How will you standardize data gathering in the event that multiple people are working on the project?**

##### Having participants collect data on a central form that has been designed by audit participants can go a long way towards ensuring that there is uniformity in the gathering of data, as can specific training sessions to ensure that all study participants understand the expectations of them. Tredway library used standardized language within our centralized Google spreadsheet, including drop-down selection to ensure that participants labelled categories the same throughout. This also helped ensure that statistics could be generated using the built-in features of the spreadsheet.

##### \*\*\*A sample audit spreadsheet based on the audit conducted by Tredway Libraryhas been provided within the toolkit, which can be used to standardize your data gathering.

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### **What timeline will you anticipate for completion of the project? How will participants fit this additional work into their existing roles?**

##### Tredway Library found it easier to not have a hard deadline, but rather to set an intended goal. Reevaluation at various points throughout the process is critical to assessing your progress and to determine if goals need to be adjusted.Participation should be voluntary, leaving it to the individual to determine for themselves if they are able to fit this audit into their existing roles. If this project is given high priority by the library as a collective, it may be possible for other projects to be completed at later dates or upon completion of this time commitment.

### **What sources of information will you accept as credible sources? How will you ensure that you are relying on the author’s self-identification and not your own perspective as a third party?**

##### It is important to ensure throughout this process that you are relying on the author’s self-identification of their identity, rather than your own perceptions as a third party observer. Categorizations made as an outsider can be incorrect, and subject to our own individual biases and preconceptions.



##### Tredway library chose to focus on sources coming directly from the author as the most reliable (social media posts, blog posts, personal websites, LinkedIn and other professional platforms, interviews, ‘About the author’ sections, etc.). If the information could not be determined from these sources, secondary sources were used only if there was a reasonable likelihood that the author could have asked the source to change any incorrect information (i.e. profiles on college websites, publisher’s ‘About the Author’ information, etc.)

### **How will you build in flexibility to account for individuals whose identity is not clear, or who may not fit into any of the categories you have created?**

##### While relying on standardized language and forms can be useful to insure consistency in data gathering, it can prevent any spontaneity in adding in new categories for individuals whose identity is unclear, or who may not fit into any of the pre-arranged categories. Therefore, considering how audit participants will account for such authors is an essential step at the beginning of the process.

##### Tredway Library opted to include a ‘see comment’ field on our spreadsheet, allowing participants space to add in any notes. The project leads then would read through and could then add new categories as needed to ensure that the data gathering was inclusive of all identities. This also provided an opportunity for any ambiguities to be addressed, by creating a system in which a second person could look at the same information.

## **During the Audit**

### **How will you track progress on the audit?**

##### Google spreadsheets, Google forms, and Microsoft forms are easy ways to track progress. Periodic meetings with participants can help to get anecdotal information on how each person is progressing with the project.



### **What means will you offer for participants to provide feedback on the process?**

##### Individual checks in, periodic group meetings, and encouragement of emailing questions or asking questions in person are all ways for participants to provide feedback. Anonymous feedback forms are another way to provide feedback for individuals who may not wish to address concerns directly.

### **How will you check-in with individual participants? How will you prevent burnout and support the emotional health of participants?**

##### It is important to encourage participants to take breaks for 1) emotional and mental health and 2) to prevent mistakes due to burnout. Some people do well investigating audit information for longer periods of time and develop a system; others need frequent breaks to clear their head. If you find participants becoming frustrated with results or going through results quickly, encourage them to work on something else for a while.

##### The results can be difficult to see for different reasons. Check ins with participants is important to gage how they are feeling. During Tredway Library’s audit, there were several participants who identify with groups that were underrepresented or absent from the collections that were being audited. Checking in with these participants became essential to helping preserve their emotional and mental health as they processed their own lack of representation within the library space.

### **How will your library handle problematic works or authors discovered within the collection during the auditing process?**

##### Problematic authors (i.e. research fraud, sex offenders, etc.) were discovered several times during the Tredway Library audit. It highlighted the importance of having library-wide discussions about censorship, weeding, and the importance of spot checking different works. Ultimately, having a policy or series of guidelines on what to do when you encounter a work whose author or content is problematic may help provide guidance in these moments.

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## **After the Audit**

### **How will you convey this information to relevant entities within and outside of your library?**

##### Can liaison or subject-specialist librarians share the information with their subject areas?

##### Can the information be provided in a newsletter or a blog?

##### Can you have a presentation of your audit at your institution?

##### Put together a small report of your findings and send them to relevant offices on campus (i.e. Academic Affairs, Board of Trustees, Office for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion, etc.)

### **What directions will your library take after having produced this data?**

#### Are there new directions your collection development needs to take?

#### What reasonable goals can you set that can be measured?

#### How can you build continued assessment into library practice?

#### How will the library hold itself accountable for continuing this work?

#### Are there ways to connect these future directions with college-wide objectives?

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