LIS and Mental Health

Her Excellency Sharon Johnston on Mental Health and New Graduates

In June 2017, Her Excellency Sharon Johnston received an honorary doctorate from Western University. Speaking to graduating students in nursing and law programs, she offered some mental health advice:

As you begin your careers, I invite you to remember three simple things.

First, go out into the community to find out what mental health resources exist…before you need them.

Second, socialize the issue of mental health among your peers. They may need your support. The unique stresses on lawyers and nurses are as great or greater than any other profession. Fatigue, burnout, family stress, and coping behaviours including alcohol and drugs are quite prevalent in highly trained professionals. Be open and listen to each other.

Third, be honest with yourself. You are entering a profession with notoriously high demands and are a precious Canadian resource that we cannot afford to see damaged. It is right and honourable to ask for help if you need it. Set a leading example by summoning the courage to seek assistance early. Then learn from that experience in ways you can share.

So there it is. Just three bits of advice, really. Where mental health is concerned, be informed, support your peers, and be kind to yourself. You can't go wrong.

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Reference

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Editors:
Robyn Schafer
Cabot Yu

Guest Editor:
Sarah Edgar

E-mail: info@librarianship.ca

Website: https://librarianship.ca

Green Ribbon,
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About the Cover Image

Mental Health is represented by a green ribbon. In the 19th century, green was the colour used to label people who were considered "insane".

The mental health community decided to continue to use this colour, but to give it a completely different meaning. Today, the green ribbon represents new growth and new beginnings.

Source: Kelty Mental Health Resource Centre (http://keltymentalhealth.ca/)

Topic: LIS and Mental Health

Colleen Amatruda is an Information Services Librarian at the London Public Library's Central location and has had the great pleasure to work directly with the Wellness Centre Program. Her eclectic collection and programming responsibilities include Visual Arts and Art History, Technology, and Social Justice. Colleen is involved in several anti-poverty advocacy groups including Bridges Out of Poverty (Guiding Coalition) and the Child and Youth Network's Ending Poverty table.

Mary Lynne Bartlett designed the foundation for the University of Waterloo Library Ambassador program, drawing on her 16 years of experience as a supervisor. She has a Master of Arts degree in Tourism Policy and Planning and has worked at University of Waterloo since 2008. She has held her position within the Library department since 2010. Her role within the Library has involved maintaining the Library's social media presence and taking photographs.

Michelle Bergeron is the Digital Services Technician at Pickering Public Library in Ontario. Michelle is a founding member of the WorkWell Committee, Pickering Public Library's mental health advisory group. She has a Bachelor of Science degree, majoring in Biology, and is a learning enthusiast who has worked in nearly every library function since her career began in 2006. Contact Michelle at michelleb@picnet.org

Jacquelyn Burkell is an Associate Professor and Assistant Dean of Research in the Faculty of Information and Media Studies at Western University. Her teaching in the Library and Information Science program at Western focuses on health information and research methods. Her research focuses on the implications of online information delivery in health and other contexts, including the justice sector.

Emily Carlisle is an MLIS student at Western University and currently a Special Projects Library Assistant at Western Libraries. When she is not knee-deep in readings and essays for school, she enjoys practicing yoga, spending time outdoors, and curling up with a classic chick-flick.

Brent Carr has worked with Canadian Mental Health Association Middlesex (CMHA Middlesex) for nine years. During this time he worked in various roles including team lead for a treatment program, employment support, outreach work, and the development of a social enterprise. Most recently Brent is serving as the Manager of Community Wellness and Justice Programs. Brent has been involved in the launch of innovative approaches that promotes a wellness perspective to mental health which includes launching a community hub. Brent graduated from Loyalist College with a B.A.A. in Human Services Management and obtained in B.S.W. from the University of Manitoba. Brent currently is completing his M.S.W. from the University of Waterloo.

Jessica Carswell is a Mental Health Worker at the Canadian Mental Health Association Middlesex (CMHA Middlesex). Jessica has a strong commitment to creating inclusive communities that support mental health and wellness, and fostering opportunities for greater connectivity and collaboration with other health and social services to enhance service delivery. Jessica has been using these interests to assist with the development of the Welcome Centre model in partnership with the London Public Library's Central branch. She was given CMHA Middlesex's 2016 Mental Health Champion award. In addition to her work at CMHA Middlesex, Jessica is a member of the Global MINDS @ Western Fellowship Program, an interdisciplinary initiative focused on finding solutions for complex global mental health challenges.

Meagan Collins holds an Honours BA and MA from Brock University in Political Science. She is currently completing the Master of Library and Information Science at Western University.

Kate Deibel is the Inclusion & Accessibility Librarian at Syracuse University Libraries in New York. She has a PhD in Computer Science from the University of Washington but would much rather talk about web comics, chili peppers, technology adoption, and changing the world. Connect with her on Twitter @metageeky.

Nicole Doro holds an Honours BA and an MA from McMaster University, and is currently studying for her

MLIS at Western University.

Sarah Edgar is a recent graduate of Western University's MLIS program. She is an Adult Programming Library Technician at the Halton Hills Public Library. Sarah is passionate about customer service, workplace wellness, and innovative programming. She is the guest editor of this issue of *Voices*.

Violet Fox is a metadata and cataloging expert in central Minnesota. She's one of the organizers of the Twin Cities Zine Fest and is excited to help plan the Zine Librarians unConference in Minneapolis this summer. Ask Violet about the ethics of classification, but only if you have a lot of time on your hands. Connect with her on Twitter @violetbfox

Jessica Knoch is the Manager, Learning and Development at the Edmonton Public Library. A former librarian and branch manager, she understands the need for wellness initiatives that support staff during and after stressful public service interactions and is committed to helping staff build skills around mental health first aid, self-care and personal resiliency.

Cassie Lee is an information management specialist in Ottawa-Gatineau supporting the implementation of EDRMS (GCdocs) in several federal departments. She enjoys baking, writing, and snowboarding in her spare time.

Danielle MacKinlay is the Manager of Library Services at the Canadian Coast Guard College, in Sydney, Nova Scotia. She is interested in information management, mental health and libraries, bibliotherapy, and bilingualism in library services. Danielle lives in Westmount, Cape Breton, with her husband and three children, and has a small craft business where she creates artwork, enamel and resin jewellery, and anything else she can get her hands on.

Kyle Marshall is a new Community Librarian at the Edmonton Public Library, having recently moved from Planning, Assessment and Research. He is passionate about community engagement and reducing barriers to library access.

Caleigh Monk is currently an Educational Technology Specialist at Fanshawe College, where she focuses on enhancing instructional design, strengthening eLearning and information literacy, and optimizing the use of OERs. Caleigh is also a recent graduate of the MLIS program at Western University, the current Editor of SLA's *Wired West Bulletin*, and a former government librarian.

Abe Oudshoorn is an Assistant Professor in the Arthur Labatt Family School of Nursing at Western University, as well as the Department of Psychiatry Schulich School of Medicine & Dentistry, Associate Scientist with Lawson Health Research Institute, and a member of the Centre for Research on Health Equity and Social Inclusion. Having worked as a nurse with people experiencing homelessness, Abe's research focuses on health, homelessness, gender, trauma, housing policy, mental health, and poverty. Abe is the recipient of Western University's 2016 Humanitarian Award.

Preethi Rao began her role as a co-lead for the Library Ambassador Program when she joined the University of Waterloo Library as a Project Coordinator in January 2017 as a co-op student from Western University's MLIS program. Her contract has since been extended until August 2018. She works with the Library to refine its internal priorities and project planning process and coordinates the $3 million 2017/2018 Library Renovation Project.

Tanya Sinclair is the Deputy CEO & Director of Human Resources at Pickering Public Library in Ontario. In 2017, Tanya was recognized as one of the Top 25 HR Professionals in Canada by *Canadian HR Reporter*. Tanya has a Master of Arts in Interdisciplinary Studies and holds the Certified Human Resources Executive CHRE designation. Contact Tanya at tanyas@picnet.org

Breaking the Silence
by Sarah Edgar

Mental health awareness tends to vary among individuals. You might only think about mental health concerns during Mental Health Week or on Bell Let's Talk Day. Maybe you haven't experienced mental health concerns yourself or within your family or friend circle. Maybe you have. Maybe you experience mental health and wellness concerns every single day in your workplace. I fall somewhere in the middle of this spectrum. My first public library job was in a location that didn't see mental illness or mental health concerns in the ways that large central city libraries do. As a result, I hadn't given much thought to the mental health concerns of patrons until it was smack dab in front of me. My encounter transitioned from a conversation to a complete level of confidence within the same interaction. Aside from tapping into my maternal instincts to provide support, I had no idea what my role was or what I should do.

I understood my own context of mental health and wellness in terms of my personal struggle to maintain balance and deal with imbalance and anxiety. My experience at work sparked an interest in mental health in the context of the LIS profession. Experiencing mental health concerns or mental illness in libraries is not something that was addressed in library school and aside from one workplace mandated workshop that provided a general overview of mental health and compassionate training, I needed to understand how we can support patrons and provide access to care. This is when I embarked on my research project in the final semester of my MLIS at Western University. I conducted original research with Paulette Rothbauer in order to understand the experiences of other library workers in relation to mental health and in particular, with young adults in public libraries. However, this is only one area of mental health that exists in the larger LIS profession and this edition continues the exploration.

What we know:

- Mental health concerns are experienced uniquely and should be treated uniquely by finding the right local partner to refer someone to or simply providing support

- Libraries are often safe spaces and places of refuge for people experiencing mental illness or mental health and wellness concerns

- Libraries typically implement mental health training, policies and procedures, resource guides or local partnerships after they have encountered patrons or staff with mental health or wellness concerns

- Library workers need the knowledge of, access to resources, and an understanding of who their local or on-site partners are in order to provide assistance

- Mental health resources and partners are keys to successfully providing compassionate services and access to mental health care

- Worker mental health and wellness is often overlooked in the LIS profession and is either experienced external to the workplace or may be triggered as a result of empathetic public services or emotional labour

Trends in LIS mental health practice:

- Implementation of mental health awareness and Mental Health First Aid training

- Employee-led mental health and wellness committees

- Library partnerships with local mental health organizations

- Mental health programming for patrons such as mindfulness workshops

- Peer-to-peer mental health engagement in academic libraries

- Social media sharing and support including participation in mental health week

While my professional experience lies within the public library sphere, this edition of voices provides perspectives from all reaches of librarianship, broadening the topic of mental health and providing a better understanding of LIS experiences and our role in responding to situations and understanding how we can be proactive.

In this issue of *Voices,* you will read about mental health training, experiences and programming in public, academic and special libraries. The first article is **Cassie Lee's** personal account of beating mental illness. The next two articles focus on mindfulness in the workplace and creating mental health discussion in the LIS community. Western University MLIS candidates **Nicole Doro** and **Meagan Collins** talk about mindfulness in the library profession and discuss mindful tools that can be used in the workplace. **Violet Fox** and **Kate Deibel** discuss mental health in the LIS profession through the creation and recurrence of the LIS Mental Health Week since 2016, the #LISMentalHealth hashtag and the development of their "Reserve and Renew" zine that will premiere at this year's ALA midwinter conference.

The following four articles focus on mental health in the public library sphere, ranging from research to implementing training programs and mental health programming. **Sarah Edgar** talks about her research on mental health and young adults in public libraries. **Kyle Marshall** and **Jessica Knoch** from Edmonton Public Library discuss how they serve and have increased staff confidence and

competence when serving socially vulnerable populations. **Tanya Sinclair** and **Michelle Bergeron** talk about the implementation of a workplace psychological health and safety (PHS) system and their WorkWell Committee, which is their mental health advisory group at Pickering Public Library. **Jessica Carswell, Dr. Abe Oudshoorn, Colleen Amatruda, Dr. Jacquelyn Burkell,** and **Brent Carr** discuss the integrated service model that is the "Welcome Centre," created in partnership with the Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA) Middlesex and London Public Library's central branch that aids library staff and patrons with mental health and wellness concerns.

The next two articles are academic perspectives on student mental health and wellness. **Emily Carlisle** assesses how academic library "Stress Buster" activities engage students and how students fail to recognize the importance in taking wellness breaks. **Mary Lynne Bartlett** and **Preethi Rao** tell us about the University of Waterloo's Library Ambassador program that facilitates peer-to-peer interactions with students that promote mental health and stress reduction as well as career planning and counselling services.

The final two articles are contributions from special libraries. **Danielle MacKinlay** discusses the development of an employee-led Mental Health and Safety Committee (MHSC) and mental health awareness at the Canadian Coast Guard College Library. Finally, **Caleigh Monk** provides virtual solutions for isolated information professionals working alone or within larger organizations.

Beating Mental Illness: How I Survived and Thrived with Depression

by Cassie Lee

Depression is so prevalent and yet so rarely discussed in our society, despite statistics that show that every 1 in 4 are impacted by mental illness throughout their lifetime. Although we see more people embracing their experiences in the news and increasing stories shared on social media, I wonder if we are doing enough to fight the stigma surrounding depression and mental illness. I am a twenty-five-year-old woman and here is my story on how I survived and thrived with depression.

In December 2016, I worked for the government, had my own place, and had proudly paid off all my student debt. I was successfully sliding into adulthood. Everything was going great up until January 2017, when I began taking sick days off work and canceling social commitments. I could not will myself to get out of bed. I felt deeply unworthy of love and underserving of all my accomplishments. Feelings of self-loathing and shame kept resurfacing with increasing intensity and frequency to the point where I fell into a deep depression. I was broken by March.

Although I had experienced milder depression prior to that, last winter I endured the darkest depression I had ever known. I cried incessantly and started fights with my fiancé for no reason at all. Finally, I started having feelings of suicide and self-harm. I desperately wanted to escape my life.

Shortly thereafter, my mother-in-law found me a doctor who swiftly diagnosed me with bi-polar disorder and prescribed me with Latuda.

Since then I have been slowly working on improving my mental health by exercising weekly, taking long walks with my dog, and eating healthier. I am still terrified that I will return to that dark place, but I cannot live in fear of my mental illness. I am learning to deal with depression and bi-polar disorder one day at a time. There are still bad days now and then, but I have the support and resources at my disposal to beat mental illness.

Although this story will always stir feelings of shame and guilt, it will also mark a turning point in my life where I chose to overcome depression rather than become a victim.

With society finally opening the doors on taboo topics like mental illness, I am proud to share my story in the hopes that others will be brave enough do the same. We need to own our stories so that future generations have more tools and resources available than those before them. I wish I could bury that broken girl away and never look back, but she has become a fundamental part of my story and my rise to strength. If depression has taught me anything, it is that without adversity and affliction we cannot transcend to greatness.

Mindfulness in the Library: A Proactive Approach for Mental Health in LIS

by Meagan Collins and Nicole Doro

The act and practice of mindfulness has begun to receive more discussion in the past few years due to its attributed health benefits. Mindfulness is simply being present and aware of the current moment and is defined as "a deliberate, present-moment, non-judgmental awareness" (Anzalone, 2015, p. 565) of everything around you. Although this practice is often associated with Buddhism or yoga, it is truly an interdisciplinary practice that has a myriad of health benefits. This is especially true in librarianship, as many in the field experience the feeling of 'burnout' due to the level of professional multitasking required in the profession (Anzalone, 2015). In a library workplace setting, mindfulness can help decrease this burnout amongst staff working with the public, it can increase happiness and wellness on the job, and also increase productivity.

While libraries may not always be thought of as an extremely stressful work environment, discussions with librarians will tell a different story. Those in the library profession face the daily issues of increased precarious employment, a constant questioning of the future of their jobs, increased involvement with outreach and vulnerable members of communities, and continuously changing expectations of their stakeholders. This results not only in job dissatisfaction, but also major health concerns (Ruhlmann, 2017). An emphasis on mindful meditation for librarians has been shown to increase focus, develop coping strategies when dealing with stressful people or situations, an increase in empathy and relationship building – both with community members and co-workers, and also helps develop the ability to practice active reflection (Ruhlmann, 2017).

Libraries, and librarians themselves, are instituting more mindful practice into their institutions and individual lives. One survey conducted in 2016 showed that out of 629 librarians surveyed, 78% stated that they have engaged in some form of mindful practice, and 28% stated their institution provided some support to mindful practice both for the employees and for their patrons (Moniz, Henry, Eshleman, Moniz, & Slutzky, 2016). Some libraries provide guided meditation workshops for patrons, others provide extended breaks and special rooms for library workers to practice mindful techniques throughout their day. One of the more advanced techniques being introduced in libraries today is the use of interactive mindfulness technology. The University of Oklahoma installed projectors throughout their university library to project Sparq meditation labyrinths that could be selected and manipulated by students with handheld touch-screens. The idea behind the initiative was to counteract the stress of its largely computer-centric patron base with more mindful technology. A group studying the effects of this initiative highlighted strong approval by students and reported that 65% of students felt more relaxed after interacting with the labyrinth (Cook & Croft, 2015). These are just some of the current mindfulness initiatives being introduced in libraries today.

Another area in librarianship where initiative has been taken in promoting greater mindfulness is in the very pedagogy of studies in library science. For example, the University of Toronto has integrated meditation into their Foundations of Library and Information Science course. They have found that from an academic context, increased mindfulness "has the potential to reduce stress and anxiety, leading students to increased academic performance and optimal learning" (Hartel,

Nguyen, & Guzik, 2017). This integration of mindfulness into the foundation of the LIS field allows for the continued promotion of the concept as LIS students move into professional positions.

Incorporating Mindfulness into Your Library Workplace

Although the concept of mindfulness is simple, it is not always easy. Since breath is a constant variable in human existence, it is often the easiest anchor to the present moment on which to focus. Jon Kabat-Zinn (2014) writes:

> To use your breathing to nurture mindfulness, just tune in to the feeling of it… the feeling of breath coming into your body and the feeling of breath leaving the body. This doesn't mean deep breathing or forcing your breathing, or thinking of your breathing. It's just a bare bones awareness of the breath moving in and the breath moving out. (p. 18-19)

This awareness of breath is a primary and ubiquitous tool for mindfulness and is an effective way to proactively address mental health and wellbeing concerns that arise in librarianship.

In Thich Nhat Hanh's volume *The Art of Communicating* (2014), he features a chapter entitled "Mindful Communication at Work." The ideas listed in this chapter could be modified to be applicable to information professionals in library settings. Some examples of these strategies are as follows:

- A computer mindfulness bell. It is easy to become absorbed into computer screens or the task at hand, so programming a personal computer to make a quiet bell sound at a chosen interval can be a reminder to pause, and take a few deep breaths being present in the moment.

- Take water or tea breaks. When drinking the beverage of choice, devote all of your awareness to the act of drinking. There is no thinking, just the observation of the temperature of the cup in hand, of the taste of the liquid, of the sensation in the mouth, and of the breath between sips.

- Take the time to smile and greet colleagues when arriving at work, to help set the tone of warmth and openness.

- Treat the ring of the phone as a bell for mindfulness. Take a full deep cycle of breath before answering the phone, in order to mindful and present for the person on the other end, whether it's a patron or colleague. In order to indicate to co-workers that you are taking a mindful pause before answering the phone (and are not simply refusing to answer it), you can place a hand on the handle of the phone while you take a deep cycle of breath.

- Mindful meetings. At the beginning of staff meetings, schedule a moment or two for staff to sit together with eyes closed, taking a few deep breaths. Taking the pause for presence and mindfulness together can foster a more open environment for the meeting, where deep active listening can occur, with minimal interruptions or verbal duels.

Increased mindfulness has shown to result in a multitude of different health benefits; but it also has added professional benefits for organizations. For individuals, studies have shown that participation in mindful meditation reduces insomnia, anxiety and depression. For organizations, these benefits have translated in less missed work days and fewer visits to medical professionals (Ruhlmann, 2017).

Overall, these changes can contribute to a community of mindfulness in the library workplace culture. The more information professionals engage in mindfulness in the library, the more they will model these behaviours, which will encourage others to take part. These tools are all free, and do not take much time, but have the potential to make

a large and lasting positive impact on the library workplace environment.

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LIS Mental Health: Creating a Community and Breaking the Silence

by Violet Fox and Kate Deibel

Mental health is an issue that impacts everyone. Maintaining a healthy emotional and psychological state is an important consideration for people of every ethnicity and socioeconomic status. Sadly, there is also great stigma associated with mental illness. People with mental illness are often the villains in our stories. Struggling with depression, not moving past trauma, or facing daily anxiety are often thought of as personal failings and lead to people isolating themselves. One effective way to move past this isolation is to talk openly about mental health and illness and, by revealing that many of our peers face mental health challenges, demonstrate that no one needs to struggle alone. LIS Mental Health is one such effort.

The idea behind LIS Mental Health Week began in October 2014 when Cecily Walker, inspired by a recent Geek Mental Help Week, proposed the idea of a week in which all people who work in libraries could come together to talk about mental health. Walker suggested that library workers could write about mental health issues, record a podcast episode about mental health in the profession, publish articles about mental health in professional journals or on their websites, and/or organize local events to talk about mental health issues. Kelly McElroy helped Walker make the idea a reality and January 18-23, 2016 was designated by Walker and McElroy as the first LIS Mental Health Week. In 2017, a subsequent LIS Mental Health Week was held January 30-February 3, coordinated by McElroy, Courtney Boudreau, Kate Deibel, and Jessica Schomberg.

During the LIS Mental Health weeks, various online activities were coordinated to promote and encourage discussion of mental health within library, archives, and related information professions. Twitter discussions, including both asynchronous conversation as well as scheduled hour-long chats, used the #LISMentalHealth hashtag to coordinate discussion on various issues such as self-care, institutional support (or the lack thereof), perceptions of mental health, and more. Postings about mental health on personal and institutional blogs further propelled dialogue. Resources and support services information were compiled through crowdsourcing. Efforts were also made to ensure that people felt safe in their discussions; options for writing anonymous blog posts and tweeting anonymously were provided.

Overall, the general response was strong and positive. Participants shared their frustrations with the stress caused by insecure and low-paying jobs, frequent moves (leaving behind not only friends and family but trusted doctors and therapists), and financial debt. Those that were willing to share their own stories lamented that such openness could potentially threaten their future employability. Intersectional aspects of managing mental illness alongside other racial issues (especially within the very white field of LIS) led participants of color to invoke worries of burnout and exhaustion. Although some naysayers criticized how much the discussions focused on library professional themselves, LIS Mental Health Week helped emphasize that if we are to address mental health issues in our communities, library workers need to take steps to recognize and address their own mental health challenges.

Inspired by the #LISMentalHealth Twitter chats and continuing discussion, in September 2017 Violet Fox and Annie Pho began exploring ways to further collect and disseminate these important library mental health discussions. They took inspiration

from the work of LIS Microaggressions, a project created by Cynthia Mari Orozco in 2014. The team behind LIS Microaggressions describes their Tumblr as "a space for those working in libraries, archives and information fields to share their experiences with microaggressions." This social media-fueled project has found an audience eager to hear more and has resulted in seven published LIS Microaggressions zines and several presentations.

Excited about the possibility of a similar zine collaboration, Fox and Pho compiled a team of people who had been active in the #LISMentalHealth dialogue on Twitter. The team, consisting of Kate Deibel, Violet Fox, Nicole Gustavsen, Kelly McElroy, Abigail Phillips, and Annie Pho, agreed on a title for the zine ("Reserve and renew," a play on traditional library circulation activities) and on the scope of the call for submissions:

Contributions are welcome from anyone involved in "big tent" librarianship or archives: if you work or volunteer in a library or archive (currently or formerly), if you're working towards a library degree, or are otherwise involved in library or archives-related work, we want to hear from you.

Submissions might include:

- *personal narratives*

- *creative writing and poetry*

- *visual arts (drawing, painting, photography, collage, comics, digital art, photographs of embroidery, etc.)*

- *encouraging thoughts*

- *tips for coping and radical self-care practices*

- *consideration of the effects of capitalism and oppression on mental health*

- *calls for changes in how we think about mental health & wellness*

Contributions will be published under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial license (CC BY-NC) unless otherwise requested.

Like all previous #LISMentalHealth efforts, submissions could be submitted and published anonymously. The editorial team also decided that the printed zine would be sold online and in person at library conferences and that proceeds would be donated to Mental Health First Aid, a public education program that aims to help communities understand mental illnesses, seek timely intervention, and save lives.

The submission period was open for three months and over twenty submissions were received. Creations for the zine included a summary of a scientific study on low morale in the workplace, poetry, images of embroidery, found images, radical self-care tips, and personal narratives focusing on hospitalization, workplace stress, and other experiences of mental illness.

The zine is scheduled for release at the American Library Association Midwinter Conference in February 2018. The editorial team of "Reserve and renew: the LIS Mental Health zine" views the collaborative work as an engaging way to highlight the importance of mental health and hopes that its publication will inspire further conversations and further action in the support of the mental health of library workers.

The third LIS Mental Health Week is scheduled for February 19-23, 2018. Find more information about the zine and join in the discussion at the LIS Mental Health Tumblr or via the #LISMentalHealth hashtag on Twitter.

Research Study: Mental Health and Wellness in Young Adults in Public Libraries

by Sarah Edgar

It wasn't until I became confident in my role at a public library that I began to think about how public library workers are expected to respond to mental health and wellness concerns. In a particular case, I had become a confidante to a minor, and I wanted to respect her privacy and autonomy, but was worried about aspects of her mental health and wellness based on things she had disclosed to me. I was unsure of my responsibility and it was not clear to me who I could ask for advice. I began to think more about mental health and how it can be visible, invisible and unique for individuals. This made me wonder if other public library workers have encountered similar situations, shared concerns about their roles and if they had questions about the resources available when assisting youth with mental health or wellness issues.

As one of the last open spaces in the public sphere, public libraries often function as safe and inviting spaces for young adults who may feel unwelcome in other places. As such, young people may come to know and trust libraries and library workers and may develop confiding relationships with specific staff members. To become familiar with and equipped to deal with mental health encounters, training can help workers understand and recognize behaviours associated with mental health, risks of suicide, their roles and responsibilities, and how to provide access to information and local resources.

In the summer of 2017 I conducted a research project with Associate Professor Paulette Rothbauer at Western University on mental health and wellness in young adults in public libraries. It didn't take long for us to establish a research scope that not only focused on experiences of staff but also on the effects of mental health and wellness training in public libraries in situations and encounters with youth.

Our online survey included open and closed ended questioning on participant demographics, experiences with young adults and mental health, mental health training, and programs or policies that have been implemented by public libraries. Overall, we wanted to explore the scope of mental health and wellness concerns in the context of services to young adults in public libraries and to learn about shared experiences and feedback that encourages implementation.

We received 36 responses including partial and full responses from library workers across Canada with a range of job titles, employment status, and number of years worked. Participants expressed varied experiences with mental health and young adults. In general, our findings show that library workers want to be better equipped to provide access to care, while understanding that it is not their responsibility to provide care itself. 72% of respondents have experience with young adults and mental health or wellness concerns. Types of mental health concerns experienced include self-harm, depression, anxiety, mood disorders, suicide, noticeable distress, general stress, anger and acting out, substance abuse, body dysphoria, LGBTQ+ issues, online bullying, and harassment.

When asked about training, 70% of respondents have received some sort of mental health training. While this number is quite high, most participants were still unsure if they would be able to provide the necessary resources and support for a young adult with mental health or wellness concerns. This contrast speaks to a gap in training, internal supports, resources or experience that if addressed, would enable public library workers to feel more confident when interacting with youth or referring young adults to local mental health services.

Recurring themes include public library workers as confidantes, libraries as safe spaces for mental health

expression and exploration, mental health programming or initiatives, and the implementation of training. Across the board, participants show that they are engaged and eager to assist and to support young adults with mental health concerns. For example, one participant regularly meets with a teen volunteer diagnosed with clinical depression, and another manages the anxiety of a youth participating in their creative writing program.

It is clear that public libraries are making the effort to create dedicated spaces for young adults that can function as a refuge for teens, creating the opportunity for strong and supportive networks for youth in crisis or youth experiencing mental health or wellness concerns. In addition to providing space, libraries are spaces where concerns and questions about mental health are expressed. While some young adults confide in workers at the desks or in programs, mental health concerns are also observed by staff. For example, participants mentioned seeing evidence of self-harm as well as of young adults in distress through inappropriate behaviour or violence, often a result of being under the influence of drugs or alcohol.

Public libraries are also creating opportunities for young adults to express or address mental health through programming. While programs are not often marketed as "mental health" programs, they are safe settings in which mental health concerns are often expressed and sometimes encouraged. Examples of such programming include art classes geared towards individuals with mental health concerns, classes for meditation and resiliency, participation in mental health week and the development of local partnerships with other youth serving agencies. However, according to our responses, "bread and butter" programs like book clubs, painting nights, teen advisory groups and writing groups also provide an authentic and natural space in which teens have confided in their peers and library workers.

Over the course of the study, participants circled back to training the most. We asked participants what they think should be in place to help public

library workers understand mental health concerns and related situations and 65% of responses related to training. Specifically, participants were interested in being trained by mental health professionals rather than HR teams or internal trainers. The high interest in training connects back to equipping workers with the resources, sensitivity training and background knowledge that encourages positive attitudes and higher levels of confidence when responding to situations and providing access to local resources and mental health care.

Most library workers expressed a genuine desire to have increased professional preparedness to be able to provide access to the care that young adults need, when they need it. Importantly, library workers are strongly interested in external training, but respondents also suggested the benefits of sharing their experiences with other workers in their library systems, as a way of exchanging and developing best practices and broadening their knowledge base.

As professionals and potential confidantes, library workers should feel confident about the resources, support or access to care they are providing. This is imperative as mental health concerns often need to be responded to with both sensitivity and immediate action to provide access to care. Our findings suggest that library workers need and want more and regular training that directly pertains to young adults, to build stores of knowledge and confidence in terms of the resources and support they are providing within public libraries. While we can't be prepared for everything, public libraries can encourage a sense of understanding, unity and preparedness by implementing system wide training programs on mental health.

Serving Socially Vulnerable Populations at the Edmonton Public Library

by Kyle Marshall and Jessica Knoch

In many ways, contemporary urban libraries serve a continually diversifying group of customers. Libraries of 2018 pride themselves in responding to changing needs by offering a breadth of services for those of different ages, abilities and socioeconomic backgrounds. For many institutions, this shift first requires a critical review of the structures and paradigms that act as barriers to equitable library service.

It is in this context that, in 2015, Edmonton Public Library (EPL) embarked upon a partnership with poverty and homelessness researchers from the Faculties of Nursing and Human Ecology at the University of Alberta to study its services for socially vulnerable populations. The interests of this research were to increase staff confidence and competence at serving socially vulnerable populations and to understand how socially vulnerable populations use library spaces. This culminated in a 48 page report; for this article, the authors have focused on the findings from staff focus groups and serving customers with mental health issues.

Six focus groups were completed with five types of staff – Community Librarians, Branch Managers, branch administrators, frontline staff (two groups) and social workers – from the six system branches serving neighbourhoods with low socioeconomic indicators. Researching with staff can be tricky, as concern with the anonymity of research data and perceived impacts on employment can affect how freely staff share their opinions. To mitigate this, the focus groups were facilitated by the external researchers, and extra attention was paid to assure the participants of anonymity protections. Two other methods rounded out this mixed methods analysis; focus groups with socially vulnerable populations and customer surveys to provide customer perspective and use patterns. The last two methods are outside the scope of this article; however they will be included in further publications of the study.

Findings revolved around several major themes, including additional training for staff serving customers with mental health issues and staff wellness initiatives that support staff during and after dealing with stressful situations.

Training was a common topic of conversation in all focus groups. Staff expressed a desire to build skills in the area of mental health first aid, as well as an interest in understanding underlying issues that contribute to behavioural problems, such as effects of trauma and social development. To meet this demand, EPL has increased its offerings of Mental Health First Aid, a two-day course offered by the Mental Health Commission of Canada that teaches participants how to support those in the midst of a mental health crisis. Rather than hosting the course annually, it will now be offered every two months to allow all staff an opportunity to learn how to handle challenging situations with compassion and respect. EPL has also begun reaching out to local organizations who can lend their subject matter expertise to the development of a course that will provide staff with a trauma informed approach to customer service. Once implemented, this course will supplement general customer service training offered at EPL to support staff in better understanding how some customers' past trauma and lived experiences can impact their behaviour.

To supplement training on trauma informed service and mental health first aid, EPL has also implemented a course on tactical communication, which provides staff with tools to effectively de-

escalate challenging situations while still honouring the dignity of the customer they are working with. Furthermore, a greater effort has been made to provide staff with quick access to local experts and agencies who can offer expert services to customers in need. This has come in the form of accessible information on our staff intranet, as well as increased efforts to link staff with local agencies to present on services. As information professionals, library staff are uniquely qualified to connect customers with resources, and service referrals to local experts is a logical extension of this expertise.

Another important theme emerging from the focus group was a desire to relieve the pressure and stress that can sometimes accompany working with vulnerable populations. Participants expressed a fear of losing compassion through a desensitization of anti-social behaviour exhibited by customers, especially as the number and intensity of customer interactions build up over time. In multiple focus groups, staff explored a belief that accumulated incidents would result in a "last straw" type scenario that ends up affecting the staff member quite deeply. One participant shared their concern of becoming robotic due to the sheer number of interactions faced during any given shift. For their part, managers shared their challenges in supporting staff who might face mental health issues as a result of dealing with difficult situations on a regular basis, and acknowledged that while they are able to listen, coach and counsel, professional help is required after a certain point.

It is worth noting here that an employer-supported Employee Assistance Program (EAP) makes counseling available to all employees. However, a common theme emerging from focus groups was a desire for more comprehensive mental health support for staff, particularly during weeknights and evenings, when an EAP mental health care worker was not readily available. Recommendations included the creation of a structured, staff peer-to-peer support system (similar to those used in other helping professions, such as social work), and a

formal debrief structure, which is automatically implemented after a critical incident. EPL has trained its managers on critical incident group debriefing, a peer-led debriefing technique that is meant to reduce trauma experienced by staff members following a critical event.

EPL is also currently exploring development of courses on personal resiliency and compassion fatigue. As part of this training, EPL staff will be equipped with the ability to guide and mentor peers in personal and professional stress management and resiliency, to combat the compassion fatigue that staff expressed as a concern during focus groups. Additionally, five EPL staff completed The Circle Way Practicum in 2017 to develop internal facilitation capacity. Conversing in circle is an ancient dialogue method that provokes a high quality conversation among participants, in which it is fundamental that everyone has an opportunity to be seen, to listen and to speak fully while working towards a common purpose. EPL will be targeting opportunities to convene circle conversations that build staff resiliency.

Understanding staff's self-perceptions of their own skill gaps is an important part of evaluating organizational responsiveness to customer needs. By collaborating with external researchers, EPL strengthened its review's methodology and added a layer of neutrality to the focus groups that were conducted. Going forward, EPL will continue to assess its newly introduced training and supports for staff. Yet the study's findings were not only insightful to reducing challenges facing staff; they also illuminated the positive aspects of serving such a diverse customer base. EPL is frequently the first organization to help socially vulnerable customers, and these customers often praise staff's skills at connecting and referring them to other services. In one customer focus group, a participant summed this up quite nicely: "It's the staff, it's the people. The programs, they're good ideas, but it's the people who make the difference."

It's the Right Thing To Do: How to Implement a Workplace Mental Health Program

by Tanya Sinclair and Michelle Bergeron

Until recent years, mentioning mental health in the workplace was considered taboo. The prevailing attitude was "Don't ask. Don't tell." Mental health affects every workplace and while you may not be able to see it, it is there. As reported by the Mental Health Commission of Canada (MHCC), the statistics related to mental health are staggering:

- One in five Canadians experience a mental health problem or illness in any given year.

- Only one in three people seek and receive services and treatment.

- Mental health problems are responsible for 30% of disability claims and account for more than $6 billion in lost productivity costs due to absenteeism and presenteeism.

- 60% of people with a mental health issue say they won't seek help for fear of being labeled.

With the figures noted above, the realities of mental health in the workplace can no longer be avoided. The negative impacts of mental health challenges on workers can be reduced with the implementation of a workplace psychological health and safety (PHS) system.

In 2013, the National Standard for Workplace Psychological Health & Safety CSA-Z1003-13 (The Standard) was launched by the Mental Health Commission of Canada and the Canadian Standards Association (free e-download available at www.shop.csa.ca).

The Standard is a document that outlines a systematic approach to develop and sustain a psychologically healthy and safe workplace. It focuses on mental illness prevention and mental health promotion. The Standard is intended for everyone in the workplace, whether or not they have a mental illness. It is not a legal framework, but a set of voluntary guidelines, tools, and resources intended to guide organizations in promoting mental health and preventing psychological harm. The Standard includes information about:

- The identification, assessment, and control of psychological hazards in the workplace

- The implementation of practices and workplace cultures that support and promote PHS

- The implementation of systems to measure, review, and sustain PHS

In 2014, Pickering Public Library (PPL) began a full PHS implementation using The Standard as a guide. According to the Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA), the stigma and fear surrounding mental health begins to fade as people learn more about it. We found this to be true at PPL given that learning is a fundamental component of libraries.

In 2015, one year after implementing a workplace mental health program, PPL made direct efforts to also become a learning organization. As popularized by MIT scholar Peter Senge, a learning organization is a workplace that facilitates the learning of all employees and continuously transforms itself through learning.

The two programs were complementary. Supporting a psychologically healthy and safe workplace provided a foundation to enable the risk-taking and evolution of our learning organization endeavours. Simultaneously, following the key principles of a learning organization, which included challenging traditional points of view,

leadership at all levels, and engaging in team learning, helped to maintain the ongoing learning required to sustain positive mental health practices throughout the entire organization. We learned that a workplace mental health program does not need to be a separate, stand-alone initiative apart from other organizational goals. We found that mental health and wellness was most effective when intentionally woven into organizational values, day-to-day operational practices, and other initiatives in the same way that staff training, and physical health and safety are key workplace considerations.

Through conversations with library leaders, we discovered that other library systems wanted to improve psychological safety, but finding time was a factor and they did not know how to begin. In November 2017, PPL developed a webinar entitled *"Are you Crazy?!? How to implement a workplace mental health system in your library"* for The Partnership's Education Institute. Based on a poll conducted during the webinar, 90% of libraries did not have a workplace mental health program, but by the end of the webinar 80% of libraries wanted to implement one in the future. To assist other organizational leaders, we came up with three essential components that are PPL's recipe for successful program implementation.

ABC: Three steps to begin implementing a mental health program in your workplace

Advocates to take Action and create Awareness

Buy-in to Build a culture of support

Champion to Coordinate for Consistency and Continuity

Advocates to take Action and create Awareness

It is important to have advocates for your mental health program. Advocates can help to shape policies and procedures, make sure money is allocated for training, and communicate new

initiatives and pilot projects to staff. At PPL, we created a mental health steering committee called the WorkWell Committee, that meet once a month to address staff mental health and wellness. The Committee also plans and implements several wellness activities and pilot projects throughout the year for staff including:

- Therapy dog drop-ins

- Colouring and journaling

- Yoga sessions

Our most recent initiative, Wellness Release Time, allows staff to take a portion of their shift once a week and spend it on a wellness activity. Since mental health and wellness means something different to everyone, staff are not required to disclose to their Manager what they are spending their Release Time on. Consequently, staff felt empowered and trusted which increased participation in the pilot project.

Buy-in to Build a culture of support

Having buy-in at multiple levels throughout the organization is key in helping to ensure the continued success of your mental health program. At PPL, we made sure there was buy-in at all levels, including the CEO, HR, the Union, Joint Health & Safety Committee, and the Library Board. Our Managers took management-style assessments (including the Myers Briggs) to better understand their leadership style and how it may impact their employees' mental health and wellbeing, our Library Board got directly involved this year by making community mental health stakeholder conversations a priority and by increasing Board advocacy in this area, and staff at all leadership levels committed to building a culture of psychological health and safety. By taking a systems approach, we were able to engage everyone at all levels within the organization. Our mental health program's success is fuelled by the passion and engagement of all our staff.

Champion to Coordinate for Consistency and Continuity

It is crucial to identify an individual of influence who is willing to serve as the lead champion for your mental health program. Having a champion ensures not only that your mental health program gets off the ground, but that it continues to thrive and evolve once implemented. Inconsistent support can be a barrier to initiating a successful mental health program, so it is key to think about who is going to take on the extra workload. At PPL, having a champion was instrumental in guaranteeing that mental health is now woven into everything we do. As a result, WorkWell Committee updates are a standing item on all department meeting agendas, mental health implications are factored into all communication plans, the leadership team regularly checks-in with their employees, even our public and employee incident reports now include a debrief with staff across multiple departments.

It Works!

"It's a journey, not a race." Ed Kane, PHS Early Adopter Champion, Carleton University

Implementing a mental health program takes time and commitment from everyone in the workplace. For PPL, it is an ongoing journey of learning, awareness, and collaboration.

Since the implementation of the mental health program in 2014, the library's absenteeism reduced from 5.6% in 2015 to 4.3% in 2016. In 2017, all employees took a survey administered by Thomson Reuters resulting in PPL being awarded a silver Psychological Safety Award as part of Canada's Safest Employers by Thomson Reuters and Canadian Occupational Safety. More importantly, are the noticeable changes we see in our library.

Employees are talking openly about mental health in the same way they would talk about the weather. It is no longer a secret or forbidden topic in our workplace. Mental health is now regularly and

proactively discussed throughout the organization on every staff meeting agenda, during performance reviews, and in one-on-one conversations.

We continue to see a high level of support for our PHS program from all stakeholders—senior management, the Board, the Union, and our employees. Mental health is firmly embedded into our workplace culture and practices.

We will continue this collaborative organizational journey towards improved workplace mental health because it is simply the right thing to do.

We strongly encourage all libraries to embark on this journey with us for the overall benefit of the library profession.

Partnering to Enhance Mental Health in Libraries

by Jessica Carswell, Abe Oudshoorn, Colleen Amatruda, Jacquelyn Burkell, Brent Carr

The purpose of this article is to explore a newly developed and implemented collaboration between a community mental health agency and an urban public library, particularly a downtown branch of the library located in the city's core. Public libraries not only provide communities access to valuable knowledge and information, they have also been identified as an open and safe environment for vulnerable populations to seek refuge and support, including people experiencing homelessness and those with mental health concerns. (Brewster 2014; Westbrook 1999) It has been suggested that libraries offer a "therapeutic landscape" that goes beyond being a place where services and information are provided, and includes being a space that enhances mental health and wellbeing by creating a welcoming, comforting, and empowering atmosphere. (Brewster 94-99) While these aspirations are commendable and many libraries and their staff work hard to achieve these goals, we should not down-play the complex reality that library professionals face as they support patrons with diverse health and social needs. (Westbrook 6-25) While libraries are generally accessible and inclusive community spaces, new collaborative models need to be developed to support libraries and library professionals in achieving these goals for all patrons.

A community hub model has been proposed as one possible collaborative model to address the expressed needs of complex patrons, library professionals who seek to assist them, and mental health services tasked with promoting community health and wellbeing. Community hubs have been conceptualized as common access points to public services, such as health, social services, culture, art, education, and recreation. (Pitre) These hubs are gathering spaces where people can connect, learn, rest, grow, or meet daily needs. This model is particularly pertinent in the context of libraries, as public libraries already contain many of the key elements of community hubs, being spaces where people gather for information, service, support, community referrals and recreation. Therefore, by expanding on availability of health and social services, public libraries can undergo a simple transformation into community hubs.

To this end, the Community Wellness Programs department at the Canadian Mental Health Association Middlesex (CMHA Middlesex) and the London Public Library (LPL) chose to develop and implement a collaborative community hub project called the 'Welcome Centre'. The Welcome Centre was conceived as an adaptable and responsive service within London Public Library's Central Library where trained Mental Health Workers provide information and referrals for various community and mental health services, and immediate support for mental health and addictions crises that may arise within the library space. While Mental Health Workers are available to directly support library patrons, they also support library staff when they are in need of assistance or require consultation regarding a complex patron or situation. Congruent with the goals of CMHA Middlesex, the objective of the Welcome Centre is to develop and enhance existing community supports that promote wellness across the life span, and in turn result in greater community vitality.

CMHA Middlesex's Community Wellness Program abides by the fundamental principles of psychosocial rehabilitation (PSR) as described by Bachrach (1992), which stresses the importance of individually tailored interventions, and requires that

individuals be actively involved in meeting their own needs. (Bachrach) This 'wellness approach' is congruent with patrons independently accessing a public library, as it maintains an environment that seeks to empower peoples' strengths, and emphasizes the potential of individuals who have mental health concerns. Unfortunately, those living with a serious mental illness often suffer the most exclusion in society; such exclusions include joblessness, lack of a social network, or even bans from public places such as libraries. These barriers may both increase a person's disability and also prevent recovery. (Sayce) As LPL seeks to be a low-barrier space for all persons, it has both been a welcoming space for some of London's most vulnerable persons, while also recognizing the need to seek new opportunities to support patrons with the most complex needs. The role of the Welcome Centre is therefore 3-fold: 1) health promotion, to create meaningful opportunities for individuals to connect with the information and services necessary to support their mental health and wellness; 2) supportive listening, to act as an extension of the positive space that LPL has already cultivated; and 3) crisis mitigation, to respond to patrons whose behavior might be of concern to themselves or others. Ultimately, it is proposed that by providing a fully integrated service, the Welcome Centre is able to reduce the stigma associated with accessing mental health services and information while ensuring the approach to service provision is tailored to the specific needs of patrons requiring assistance.

Co-locating the Welcome Centre in a library through a community hub model allows LPL and CMHA Middlesex to support wellness across the lifespan. The Wheel of Wellness and the Indivisible Self model are theoretical frameworks underpinning community mental wellness services that suggest there are various domains of the self that must be supported in order to maintain wellness over the lifespan. (Myers) Domains include factors that are relevant to physical health, creativity, spirituality, personal identity, and mental health. This holistic

framework is embodied in the Welcome Centre collaboration through the promotion of community programming and services that relate to these domains and serve to connect community members and library patrons to resources that encourage optimal health and wellbeing. This framework supports the recovery model of mental health, which involves a strengths-based approach to mental health as a life-long journey to living successfully in the community. (MHCC) It is clear that the foundation the Welcome Centre is built upon is in keeping with LPL's impact focus on the quality of life of community members accessing library services.

A final anticipated benefit of the Welcome Center is the opportunity for ongoing professional development of library professionals as they work collaboratively with mental health workers. Historically, "problem patrons", patrons who use bathrooms for personal care, who use substances in the library, who display symptoms of active psychosis, or who bring large quantities of belongings into the library, have been responded to with the use of security staff. (Shuman) This approach addresses immediate safety and behavioural concerns, but does not acknowledge patrons' possible experiences of trauma and feelings of fear, vulnerability, and resistance to authority, which could in turn lead to a situation that escalates into a crisis and requires strict or punitive measures. Beyond direct client services, and themselves

responding to crises, Mental Health Workers from the Welcome Centre are consulting in an ongoing manner with library professionals and security staff to create both policies and interventions that are trauma-informed, recovery-focused, and pragmatic.

Library services have evolved greatly in the past few decades as more patrons are seeking assistance in navigating an extremely complex social service system. The reality is that not all front-line library workers and administrators are trained or aware of how to deal with these complex needs, and institutional policy can be unknowingly biased. The Welcome Centre at London Public Library's Central Library has provided an indispensable opportunity for library professionals to develop new skills and attitudes that deepen the quality of access to service to our most vulnerable patrons. Patrons have been able to easily access services and assistance at the Welcome Centre in a barrier-free, relaxed and informal way, cementing the notion that the public library is a space where multiple needs can be successfully met with dignity, respect and regard for privacy. In its first months of implementation, the Welcome Centre at the London Public Library has been an excellent opportunity to explore the benefits of the community hub model for library professionals, mental health workers and patrons alike. By building relationships based on empathy, respect and sound, solid information sharing, together the Wellness Centre at the London Public Library can continue to provide greater opportunities for Londoners to enhance wellness across the life span and continue to grow community vitality and resiliency.

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Are "Stress Busters" the Solution? Teaching Wellness at the Academic Library

by Emily Carlisle

In 2016 the American College Health Association published a National College Health Assessment Survey of 43,000 Canadian post-secondary students, revealing that 89.5% experienced overwhelm from their workload in the previous 12 months. 64.5% of respondents reported experiencing overwhelming anxiety within the same time period, while another 44.4% had at some point felt "too depressed to function." Taken alone, the survey's results are troubling enough. Paired with earlier studies, however, the results point to a significant increase in reported mental health issues this decade, and in the last 5 years especially.

The striking increase in reported mental health issues has left college and university counseling offices struggling to meet the demand for their services; at times, offices have waitlists of 50+ students (Association for University and College Counseling Center Directors, 2015). Evidently, there's a need for more mental health support on campuses—a need that the academic library may be uniquely positioned to fulfill. After all, campus libraries are often open during evenings and on weekends, times when other campus services are closed. They're also most populated during exam periods, when the student body as a whole generally experiences a surge in stress and anxiety.

Some academic libraries already recognize the possibility in their unique position on campus, providing support for student mental health in the form of "Stress Busters." Often taking place during exam periods, "Stress Buster" programming includes games, snacks, and activities that encourage students to take regular study breaks. Throughout most of my undergraduate degree at the University of Guelph (2012-2016), our main campus library partnered with services across campus to provide colouring sheets, pet therapy sessions, ice cream, and Timbit treats to students during the final weeks of each semester. When I started at Western University in Winter 2017, I was pleasantly surprised to find a "Take a Note, Leave a Note" station in the main campus library at the end of the semester, where I left an encouraging note for fellow students. Now a student library assistant at Western Libraries, I've learned that the main campus library also sets up a Wellness Station during exams, complete with healthy snacks, colouring materials, and opportunities to talk with volunteers from the Peer Support Centre. A cursory glance at the library websites of a few other Ontario campus libraries shows that McMaster, Queen's, University of Waterloo, Humber College, and University of Toronto (to name only some) have hosted similar programs in recent years. Recognizing the importance that study breaks have on student mental health, campus libraries are indeed offering students the means to intentionally break from their studies.

Do students recognize the importance of study breaks, though? Student feedback regarding lack of participation in wellness initiatives at Memorial University Libraries revealed that 50% of respondents perceived themselves to be "too busy" to participate (Rose, Godfrey, & Rose, 2015). That response is consistent with theories that—upon beginning a post-secondary education—students readily replace a balanced, healthy lifestyle with increased hours devoted to study. There may, then, be a population requiring wellness support that isn't being served by initiatives like "Stress Busters", simply because they don't make the time. Not always knowing or prioritizing the benefits that an intentional study break can have on one's mood and wellbeing, students seem to favour prolonged study

over a break for enjoyable leisure.

Despite programming intended to encourage intentional study breaks, academic libraries continue to enable rigorous study. Exam "Stress Buster" programming is often paired with extended library hours and, at some libraries, the provision of late-night free coffee. Interwoven with both is a message implying that it's acceptable to sacrifice sleep for school and studying, even though it's now well-known that quality sleep improves both mood and academic performance. In fact, consistent with the theory that students are choosing extended study over intentional breaks, the same study from Memorial University Libraries reported that longer library hours and late-night coffee/tea were more popular among students than activities like yoga, pet therapy, and colouring (Rose, Godfrey, & Rose, 2015).

While the results in the Memorial University Libraries study cannot be generalized across the entire post-secondary student population, the academic library is nevertheless at a crossroads: its initiatives send conflicting messages about student wellness.

Where is it to go from here? I maintain that for the academic library to leverage its ideal position to support student mental health, it must be committed and intentional in its strategy.

Borrowing from *Post-Secondary Student Mental Health* (2013), an organization committed to student mental health must embed its commitment into its vision, mission, and strategic goals. With support for student wellness reflected in its mission, an academic library is equipped to develop clear policies that guide a consistent direction for library practices and programming. The more consistent and dedicated to student wellness its practices and programming, the more an academic library's culture will foster wellness and enhance student mental health.

As per *Post-Secondary Student Mental Health* (2013),

a commitment to student mental health also requires frequent evaluation and improvement of all services. All library elements, whether intended to directly support student mental health or not, must be examined to determine the message being conveyed about the library's perspective on student mental health—including instruction, reference interactions, spaces, and hours. Library programs and services *directly* targeting student wellness must be subject to assessments that question their impact on student mental health, with representation from students with lived mental health concerns. After all, there's no sense expending resources on initiatives not benefiting the population for whom they are intended.

That's not to say that "Stress Buster" programming should be discontinued. Research cites many chosen "Stress Buster" activities as effective in reducing stress and anxiety and in improving mood. Colouring, for example, has been shown to be a useful method of reducing anxiety (van der Vennet and Serice, 2012), while pet therapy has been proven effective at temporarily subsiding psychological and physiological stress in undergraduate students (Crump and Terry, 2015). Likewise, social media photos from "Stress Buster" events suggest that students appreciate the programming, tagging their friends to inform them of upcoming pet therapy programs, and sharing colouring creations produced at the library.

However, "Stress Busters" are only effective insofar as students participate in the programs. The study from Memorial University Libraries, coupled with research into students' study vs. leisure habits, suggests that there's a population of students not benefitting from wellness programming like "Stress Busters" because they aren't making time to participate. Given the current student mental health crisis, and the known benefits that taking a break can have on mood and academics, the population of students *not* participating in "Stress Busters" (and their reasoning) is worthy of research.

For now, however, I'd argue that academic libraries

have an opportunity to do what they are historically known for doing well: to instruct. Putting their expertise in instruction to use, academic libraries have an opportunity to teach students about the benefits of taking intentional breaks while studying. It's a key wellness message that can be conveyed and reinforced across all elements of the library, and ultimately embedded in the library's mission to shape a library system where students are motivated to view self-care while studying as possible and productive.

My suggestions beg the final question: is it really the academic library's place to care for student mental health? In short, yes. Students populate the library in masses, making it an ideal location for wellness initiatives. More notably, the academic library's mission has always been to support student research and academic success. If the library is to continue upholding this mission, it must work to eliminate barriers to academic success—mental health concerns included.

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Promoting Mental Health through Student Engagement: Students Helping Students

by Mary Lynne Bartlett and Preethi Rao

College and university libraries are mandated with supporting students, but why should that stop with supporting their research needs? Academic libraries tend to become strongholds for stress, especially at the end of term when students are met by a minefield of submission deadlines and exams. High levels of stress can have negative effects on mental health for students, and library practitioners across academic institutions are exploring effective ways to facilitate stress reduction.

At the University of Waterloo Library, the Student Engagement Committee provides engagement opportunities for students, many of which focus on mental health and stress reduction. The Student Engagement committee's terms of reference state:

> The primary purpose of the Library Student Engagement Committee is to ensure strong engagement between students and the Library by developing, coordinating and delivering student-related events and initiatives as well as by promoting the Library's services and resources to new and current users.

The Student Engagement committee has purchased many tools and facilitated events over the last few years specifically targeted at mental health and stress reduction. Recently, the Library provided two days of therapy dogs for students. This event was highly successful, and has been mandated to be a permanent event every semester. The positive impacts on students were evident by the look of relaxation and happiness on their faces. The Library also has two mascots that help facilitate stress reduction for students. Scholar the goose is a large plush goose that students are able to pet, take pictures with, and interact with. The committee recently implemented Roget Thesaurus that is a five

foot inflatable dinosaur that appears in different spots in both libraries. Roget brings a smile to

Roget Thesaurus sitting at the Research and Assignment Help Desk in the Dana Porter Library.)

students and staff, who regularly give it hugs, high fives, and take pictures.

In May 2016 the Library Ambassador program was piloted. The Library Ambassador program is a branch of the Student Engagement committee with two co-leads, and between 8-10 students staff hired to facilitate peer-to-peer interactions with students. The Library Ambassador program has been very successful, and became a permanent program in January 2017.

The co-leads work as a team to hire, train, supervise, and coach the Library Ambassadors. The co-leads work closely with the Library Ambassadors to help

promote mental health awareness and provide the support and resources they need to be successful in their positions. Together, they work as towards promoting on-campus resources that assist with stress reduction, career planning, skills enhancement, and counselling. The co-leads

The Library Ambassadors with Scholar the Goose in front of Dana Porter Library.

provide opportunities to the Library Ambassadors to help develop a set of skills that will assist them to be successful in their future careers. These skills include time management, critical thinking, communication, interpersonal skills, adaptability, approachability, and event planning.

The Library Ambassadors are tasked with creating a term project that focuses on student engagement and the library. As part of the project, they are responsible for writing a proposal, including a budget projection, and identifying potential partnerships. Once the proposal is approved they are responsible for executing their project from start to finish, including signage requests, material requests, and communication.

The majority of the projects over the last two years have focused on mental health and stress reduction. Some of the projects have included Lego building, colouring tables, creating flextangles, book displays of marginalized groups, gratitude rocks, giant Jenga, board games cafe, and puzzles.

In the fall of 2017 one of the biggest stress reduction/mental health projects was completed. Two Library Ambassadors, Brenna Middleton and Rabia Gill created a partnership with Cambridge Memorial Hospital, the Dr. Bird Project, and UWaterloo Health Services. Their project involved students colouring mandala cards and writing well wishes to patients at the hospital. The project was highly successful as it made the patients at the hospital smile and it gave students at UWaterloo a chance to colour and give back to the community. 200 cards were handed out to patients at the hospital in late December. The President of the University of Waterloo, Feridun Hamdullahpur, joined the Library Ambassadors to colour a card for

The President of The University of Waterloo and a combination of Library Ambassadors and Staff participating in the mandala project.

a patient as well and wrote the following message in one of the cards:

"*Life brings many joys and challenges in front of us — be it the stress of exams or recovery from illness. Our mind and heart are the two most powerful helpers to let us cope with it. Especially, when we*

are fortunate to benefit from the beauty and power of the others' minds and hearts — knowing somebody else cares."

Based off of the success of the mandala project, Brenna, Rabia, Dr. Abrams, and Mary Lynne submitted a proposal to present at the UWaterloo Staff Conference. Over 600 cards were coloured and well wishes written for patients at the hospital by University staff and students. Cards were coloured during the Neuroscience 101 presentation, as well as in the Library at the colouring tables.

Each semester, the University of Waterloo Library conducts student feedback sessions, during which Library Ambassadors ask their peers how the library can better serve them. This feedback is crucial for planning future student engagement activities and adapting our current ones. For instance, it was found that students prefer a more private setting for the activities as opposed to the lobby of the library. This was especially true for the Dana Porter Library, so the activities table will be moving to a different floor of the library that will allow more privacy, but is still well-trafficked, which is important for engaging as many students as possible.

One of the easiest mistakes to make when integrating student engagement programming into academic libraries, is to leave students and their input out of the equation. The Library Ambassador Program is an important cornerstone for the student engagement efforts at the University of Waterloo Library. The ambassadors' unique perspectives on the student experience allow the Library insight that might be missed otherwise. Students are also much more responsive when engaging with their peers than with those they may deem to be authority figures, as could be the case when interacting with Library Staff.

Current trends in research show that there is a positive correlation between mental health and student engagement. As such, student engagement is an important focus for academic libraries and an integral part of promoting mental health initiatives.

Mary Lynne Bartlett (right) and Preethi Rao are the co-leads for the Library Ambassador program at the University of Waterloo. Both Mary Lynne and Preethi are also on the Student Engagement Committee, which Mary Lynne co-chairs.

Through the student feedback sessions, a recurring theme arose from the responses: the concept of the Library as a second home or a safe space for students. Making students feel welcome and cared for through student engagement is one of the many ways in which the University of Waterloo Library supports its students.

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Mental Health and Special Libraries: Finding a Role

by Danielle MacKinlay

The Coast Guard College library, located in Sydney, Nova Scotia, is both academic and technical. Our learners in the Officer Training Program (OTP), earn a four-year degree. The main focus of our collection is in nautical sciences, covering areas such as seamanship, marine engineering, naval architecture, meteorology, navigation, and even maritime law. Graduates of the OTP become either marine engineering officers or navigation officers in the Canadian Coast Guard Fleet, serving Canadians in environmental response, search and rescue, maritime security, and allowing for safety and accessibility of Canadian waters. The Canadian Coast College, and its library, operate within the context of the broader Federal Public Service, and is also bilingual in both service model and collection.

The Officer Training Program, one of the core programs offered at the College, is an intensive one. It combines academic course work in technical subjects, sciences, and languages alongside simulation and laboratory work, and hands-on experience at sea. These sea-phases, as they're referred to, last several months, and the learners may have limited communication with friends, family, instructional staff and traditional supports ashore.

I quickly realized that the library was considered a safe space by our learners. Not only was it an area to search databases and research current directives, but it was a place to meet, exchange ideas, converse, to discuss challenges and sometimes hardships.

As a library within a larger educational structure, we began to ask ourselves what else we could do to render the library, and assist the overall organization, to be a mentally healthy workplace. After some informal discussion with colleagues and academic managers, and some direction from our

on-site physician, the concept for a Mental Health and Safety Committee (MHSC) was born.

The MHSC was to be an employee-led committee, but one that would line up with Canadian standards for psychological health and safety in the workplace. We created our first terms of reference, outlining our key functions and also what the committee could and could not do. For instance, we felt the committee could take on a strong education and advocacy role for mental health in the workplace, as well as assist students and staff to find resources and mechanisms for any assistance required, and identify any potential hazards. We also indicated that the committee was not a counselling service, though its members could provide appropriate channels for mental health services if necessary. There was also much discussion surrounding anonymity and medical information.

Since its inception in 2015, the MHSC has organized two successful Mental Health Week events. We've brought in excellent speakers, chosen to be relatable to both College staff and learners. Some of the topics covered included substance use, depression, issues around sexuality and sexual health, and LGBTQ+ issues. We also held an outdoor "recharging" nature walk, a yoga session, and brought in a therapy dog (which proved to be extremely popular). Many of these events were simple to organize, and were inexpensive or cost-neutral. In 2017 we adopted a new initiative, the Not Myself Today campaign, which is in line with the work of the CMHA. This campaign is designed for workplaces to build awareness around mental health issues, reduce stigma, and foster a safe work environment. One of the most popular elements of the campaign was a series of buttons that were provided, which stated a particular mood (e.g.

happy, excited, anxious, stressed, or 'hangry'). Much of the staff participated in wearing the buttons, and we found it generated a lot of discussion surrounding moods and how we tend to express these in the workplace. The campaign's toolkit also contained posters, games, and activities; we are able to continue to offer the resources and tools from the campaign through the library.

One of the earliest projects the MHSC completed was the creation of a mental health services card; this card is aimed to provide many of the relevant local support contact information in a single discreet business card. This simple idea meant that an instructor, student or other staff member could readily provide phone numbers to a person in need. A number of services were indicated: the Employee Assistance Program (which is a counselling service for members of the Federal Public Service), the local LGBTQ+ ally centre, addictions services, and other provincial emergency services. We had a very positive response to this project; if similar cards or resources were readily in libraries, this would be a very straightforward and unobtrusive way to provide access to particular community services.

In terms of library services support, we decided to augment our collection development in the area of general mental health, and more specifically student mental health. We added more resources in a broad array of topics pertaining to work-life balance, stress and anxiety, physical fitness, and any works relating to the challenges that many students face when distanced from their personal support networks. It's been a challenge to find similar or equivalent resources in both official languages, and we expect that we will be continually updating this area of the collection as it dates quickly. We also added some non-traditional acquisitions as stress-relief for our learners; such items as origami, puzzles, and games have served as a useful mental break during exams for some.

As chair of the committee, I feel that I'm now in a better position to advocate for mental health training for students and colleagues. Most recently, members of our personnel completed Mental Health First Aid Training through the Mental Health Commission of Canada, which is designed to provide assistance to individuals experiencing a mental health problem or crisis. Two more members have become Positive Spaces ambassadors, intended to encourage training, leadership and resource sharing to support LGBTQ+ communities. Our hope is that an increase in training and education will tangibly translate to a safe, positive and accepting workplace for everyone to enjoy.

There is something quite beautiful that occurs when two fields of study complement each other in such a way to create a solution to a problem. Librarianship and mental health advocacy are a natural fit, and while librarians may not be trained professionals in social work or psychology, libraries are well-suited to offer safe spaces, information, resources, and anonymity.

Lonely Librarianship: Combating Isolation and Mental Stress in Information Work

by Caleigh Monk

Let's be honest, information work can be lonely. The labour related to literature searches, systematic reviews, and data analysis often requires information workers to spend several hours per week in solitude. This type of work can feel isolating, even for professionals employed in large institutions who have a team of colleagues in the same location to provide support. However, feelings of isolation are often intensified for those working in small or single employee libraries, as embedded information workers, or as part of a geographically dispersed team.

The topic of isolation in academia has been explored in recent years in order to understand its impact on mental health and work-related stress. For example, a 2014 survey created by The Guardian found that, out of 2500 respondents working in various academic roles suffering from mental illness, nearly half of the respondents reported feelings of isolation as having a significant impact on their mental health. As Librarians and other information workers carry out roles similar to their academic counterparts, it is not unimaginable to assume they face some of the same stressors. The solitary work of research and the changing nature of library as a space makes it imperative that LIS professionals start having open conversations related to professional isolation.

As an Information Specialist for Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, I am part of a virtual library team who are dispersed throughout the country. While I'm lucky enough to share a research centre with many talented scientists, administrators, and business analysts, I also understand how isolating it can feel to be the lone local LIS professional. Luckily, my colleagues and I have shared several conversations about feelings of professional isolation and the mental stress this can cause. Our team has managed to create a workplace culture that encourages virtual support and the sharing of experiences and coping strategies. This article aims to share some of those strategies in hopes of contributing towards a supportive and positive discussion about LIS and mental health. It also aims to reassure the LIS professionals reading this article that they are not alone!

1. Make Effective Virtual Connections

This often means going beyond hosting a monthly meeting via videoconference. Look for ways to use technology to facilitate formal and informal communication amongst team members located in different offices. Finding the right tools to assist with virtual brainstorming sessions, share drafts and projects-in-progress, and even create/deliver collaborative presentations is crucial. These tools allow geographically dispersed teams to collaborate and share the workload of major projects, reducing the likelihood that an individual employee will feel like they are 'going it alone'.

Collaborative tools also have the potential to enrich the quality of interactions between virtual teams and, in turn, build stronger professional relationships. Tools like SharePoint and Slack allow colleagues to build social hubs and add a personal touch to their interactions. These tools help facilitate informal communication and make distance employees more approachable; increasing the likelihood that teams will reach out when they are in need of help or feedback.

2. Reach Out on Social Media

Social Media can be a valuable source of professional support and can also become a place to turn when

LIS professionals are looking for feedback or collaborators. Facebook, Linkedin, Twitter, and Tumblr all have vast and dynamic platforms where individuals can find discussions ranging the spectrum of personal and professional aspects of LIS work. For example, LIS professionals looking to discuss feelings of isolation or other mental health issues related to LIS work can follow #LISmentalhealth tag on Twitter.

3. Forge Connections with Employees Outside the LIS Profession

Don't underestimate the value of connecting with coworkers outside of your branch or department. This is a particularly valuable strategy for librarians working as embedded professionals or solo librarians working in special libraries. Attend institution-wide meetings, participate in fundraisers, or organize a break activity such as yoga or running as a way to meet new employees and build more dynamic relationships. This interaction can help fight isolation by building a social community on a local level and allow LIS professionals to connect to the wider workplace culture.

4. Step Away From the Computer

As a freshly minted LIS professional, the number one thing I was told by my colleagues was to learn when to take a break and step away from the computer. It's easy to become trapped behind a desk, especially when a project is particularly in-depth or has a tight deadline. However, staying behind the desk all day can contribute to isolation by reducing the amount of social interaction and increasing the pressure to stay focused on a singular task for long periods. It's important for LIS professionals to learn how to pace themselves and take breaks effectively. Break activities that boost positive emotions, such as meditation, assisting a colleague, or physical activity, have been noted as the most effective way to increase social connectedness and decrease work-related stress.

5. Know Your Workplace Rights and Resources

It's important to become acquainted with the support your employer provides for employees experiencing mental illness or excessive mental stress. Get in touch with Human Resources and ask if the institution you work for provides an employee assistance program or workplace training related to task management or professional stress. Unions and other employee advocacy groups can also be great resources and may provide additional support for employees in the form of work description assessments or workplace accommodation. Additionally, these groups can help LIS professionals become familiar with your employer's stress and sick leave policy if leave is required. Being proactive by reaching out and learning about these resources ensures that, when you are feeling isolated or stressed, you won't be scrambling to find help.

6. Fight the Stigma

Finally, there is real value in LIS professionals voicing their struggles related to feelings of isolation and the mental stress it causes. Being open, honest, and sharing experiences with colleagues and other LIS professionals helps our community build stronger advocacy and resources to help combat this issue within the profession. Staying silent about our mental health struggles just ends up isolating us further. Opening up and discussing these issues works to break the cycle of silence and lets other professionals know they are not alone.

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Resources

by Librarianship.ca

Mental Health Commission of Canada
http://www.mhcc.ca/

The MHCC offers many tools and guidelines on a wide range of mental health topics, including on peer support, caregiving, and recovery.

National Standard of Canada for Psychological Health and Safety in the Workplace
https://www.mentalhealthcommission.ca/English/national-standard

The Standard is a set of voluntary guidelines, tools and resources intended to guide organizations in promoting mental health and preventing psychological harm at work.

Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA)
https://cmha.ca/

With local branches all over the county, the CMHA promotes mental health, resiliency, and recovery. The CMHA focuses on advocacy, education, research, and study while providing innovative services, programs, and support to individuals and families experiencing mental health concerns or mental illness.

Ontario Centre of Excellence for Child and Youth Mental Health
http://www.excellenceforchildandyouth.ca/

The Centre offers a diverse collection of info, tools and services regarding youth mental health. Click on the "Resource Hub" link.

Canadian Alliance on Mental Illness and Mental Health
http://www.camimh.ca/

One of CAMIMH's major annual initiatives is the Faces of Mental Illness campaign, a national education campaign that operates in conjunction with Mental Illness Awareness Week (MIAW).

Canadian Psychiatric Association
http://www.cpa-apc.org/

The Canadian Psychiatric Association provides downloadable brochures on a variety of mental health topics.

Canadian Psychological Association
http://www.cpa.ca/

The Canadian Psychological Association provides downloadable information sheets on a variety of mental health topics.

Teen Mental Health
http://www.teenmentalhealth.org/

This website is dedicated to helping improve the mental health of youth by the effective translation and transfer of scientific knowledge. It includes a teens and families page where anyone who is interested can learn more about adolescent mental health and the teen brain.

Mindyourmind
https://mindyourmind.ca/

mindyourmind is an online space in which mental health and wellness, engagement and technology intersect. Focusing on young people aged 14-29, mindyourmind provides interactive tools, means for discussion and creative outlets that promote mental health expression while positioning youth as the independent and knowledgeable experts.

Healthy Minds Canada
http://healthymindscanada.ca/

The Healthy Minds Canada When Something's Wrong handbooks provide useful information for teachers and families on a variety of mental health problems.

Events
by Librarianship.ca

January 31, 2018
Bell Let's Talk Day
https://letstalk.bell.ca/en/

Bell Let's Talk promotes mental health awareness, acceptance and action built on 4 key pillars: Fighting stigma, improving access to care, supporting world-class research, and leading by example in workplace mental health.

On Bell Let's Talk Day, Bell will donate more towards mental health initiatives in Canada, by contributing 5¢ for every applicable text, call, tweet, social media video view and use of our Facebook frame or Snapchat filter.

February 19-23, 2018
LIS Mental Health Week
http://lismentalhealth.tumblr.com/

The third annual LIS Mental Health Week provides the opportunity for LIS professionals to come together to talk about mental health. Online activities are coordinated to encourage mental health discussion within all realms of the library profession. The week includes Twitter discussions using the #LISMentalHealth hashtag and blog posts, all focused on changing the mindset of mental health and mental illness.

May 7-13 2018
Mental Health Week
http://getloud.mentalhealthweek.ca/

CMHA Mental Health Week is an annual national event that takes place during the first week in May to encourage people from all walks of life to learn, talk, reflect and engage with others on all issues relating to mental health.

May 7-13, 2018
Children's Mental Health Week
https://cmho.org/get-involved/children-s-mental-health-week

Children's Mental Health Week is an important time of year to highlight the importance of a healthy and well-functioning community-based children's mental health sector.

October 1-7, 2018
Mental Illness Awareness Week
http://www.camimh.ca/mental-illness-awareness-week/

Mental Illness Awareness Week (MIAW) is an annual national public education campaign designed to help open the eyes of Canadians to the reality of mental illness. The week was established in 1992 by the Canadian Psychiatric Association, and is now coordinated by the Canadian Alliance on Mental Illness and Mental Health (CAMIMH) in cooperation with all its member organizations and many other supporters across Canada.

October 10, 2018
World Mental Health Day
http://www.who.int/mental_health/world-mental-health-day/en/

World Mental Health Day is observed on 10 October every year, with the overall objective of raising awareness of mental health issues around the world and mobilizing efforts in support of mental health.

The Day provides an opportunity for all stakeholders working on mental health issues to talk about their work, and what more needs to be done to make mental health care a reality for people worldwide.